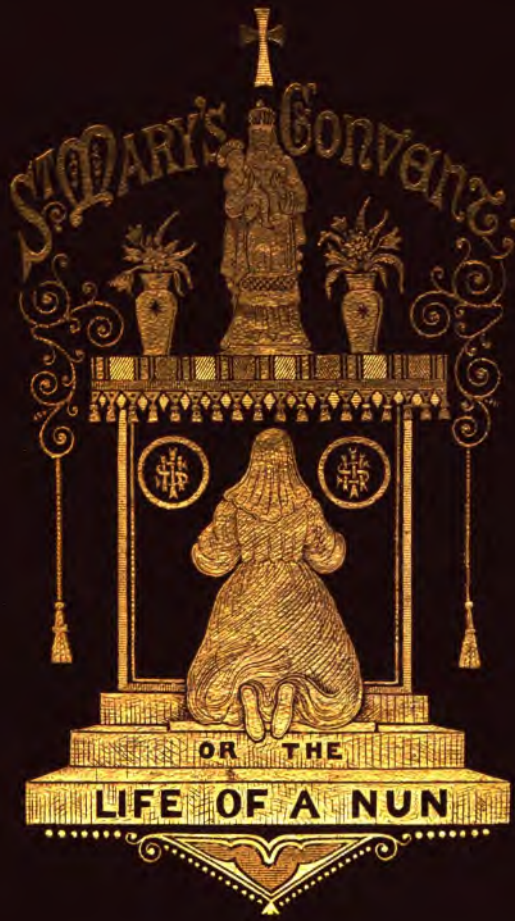
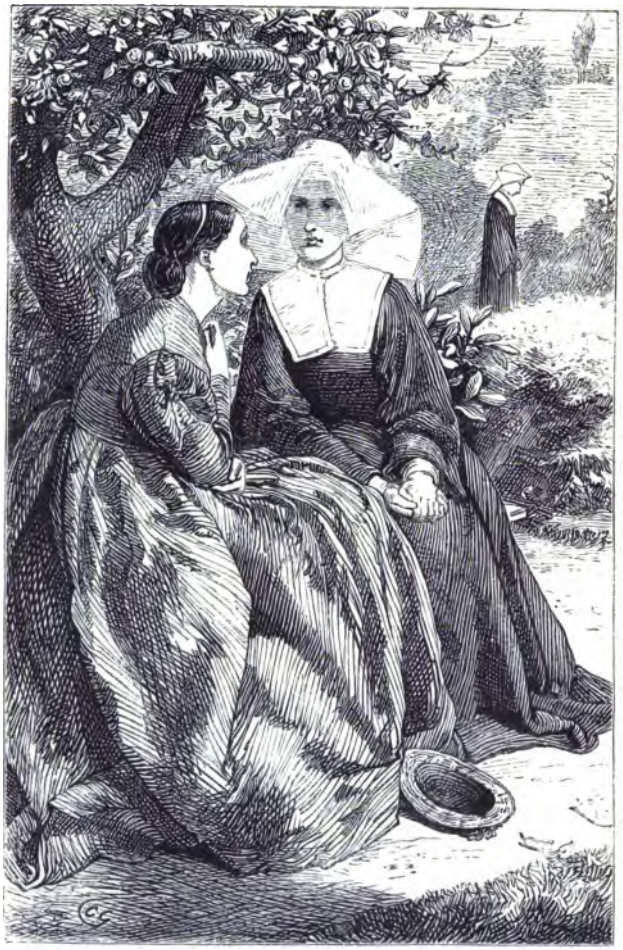

St. Mary's Convent
OR THE
LIFE OF A NUN



THE CONVERSATION IN THE GARDEN.—(pp. 55—58.)

ST. MARY'S CONVENT;

OR,

Chapters in the Life of a Nun.

BY

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"THE FATAL LEGACY," ETC., ETC.

LONDON:
S. W. PARTRIDGE, 9, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1866.

LONDON:
RICHARD BARRETT, PRINTER,
MARK LANE.

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PREFACE.

It was, I believe, the celebrated Cardinal Richelieu, who, in his sarcastic view of human nature, gave utterance to the apothegm that language was given us for the purpose of concealing our thoughts. Whether, in expressing this sentiment, he concealed or revealed his real opinion, it is impossible to say; but let us hope, for the sake of the ingenuous on the earth, that his speech was not a truism as applied to the mass, but rather a descriptive idea of the few who delight in deceit and mystery, of which arts the Cardinal was certainly a master.

In the narrative to which these observations are prefixed, I have adhered strictly to the truth in the events recorded; some of which were witnessed by myself, and others made known to me by friends (on whose veracity I could with all confidence rely), as facts of which they were eye-witnesses.

In these details I have softened the colouring in many instances, and in others smoothed away points that, if stated in their naked truthfulness, would have been too gross and shocking for insertion in a narrative meant for general reading in the family circle.

It is a frightful evil in a civilized, not to say a Christian land, that whether through mistaken zeal, or the persuasion or coercion of friends, multitudes of women are imprisoned for life as hopelessly as the lunatics in a madhouse. Nay, more so, for if a lunatic recovers his reason, he is set at liberty; but, if a poor nun comes to her senses, and reflects with sorrow on the step she has taken, in consigning herself to a life of confinement within the walls of a convent, there is no help for her,—there she is, and there she must remain under all circumstances, until death releases her from her prison-house.

What tongue can tell—what pen can write—what imagination, were it ever so vivid, can picture the tortures endured by thousands of mistaken women thus immured, and pining for that liberty of which they are so cruelly deprived?

The meanest subject in the realm can have redress if imprisoned falsely for even an hour, but nuns are shut out from all social privileges. Their individuality is ignored, merged in the communities with which they are associated, and like a veil of darkness and mystery the convent walls close them in from all help and sympathy. Separated from the outer world, they live as secluded and alone as do the lepers in their pestiferous city; and, like them, those who go in, come out no more.

Such institutions are like moral plague spots in our midst: we walk past them, casting curious, and perhaps pitying glances at the barred doors and shrouded windows, and wondering what scenes they hide; but there it ceases, and the weary-hearted inmates are left to their fate unaided. "What is every body's business is nobody's business," is not only a trite but a true saying, and as applied to convents is a mournful fact. Some few spasmodic efforts have, it is true, been made to bring about a better state of things. Inspectors and visitors of convents have been suggested as a means for

redressing the grievances of cloistered nuns; but all those proposed revisals of the system have ended as they began—in talk.

The scenes related in the pages of this book, are put before the public in the hope that every additional light thrown on the subject may stir up the minds of the thoughtful to investigate it more fully, and so help forward the time when it will be as great an offence against the law to keep a nun confined in a convent against her will, as it now is to consign to false imprisonment any other free born-Briton.

The voices of statesmen have been uplifted to abolish slavery, not only in our own possessions, but in foreign lands. Let our legislators be but as active to give liberty to the wretched women called nuns, who are incarcerated for life without a crime, and they will bring joy and gladness to many a miserable creature, now pining in vain for the freedom that is her birth-right.

London, February, 1866.

ST. MARY'S CONVENT;

OR,

CHAPTERS IN THE LIFE OF A NUN.

CHAPTER I.

HIDDEN SPRINGS.

In one of the most beautiful counties in Ireland stands a small mountain, called, in the neighbourhood, emphatically, "The Hill." From it a magnificent view is to be had of waving woods, meandering streams, and bold, undulating scenery; and, on its slope, just overlooking the small town of T——, is built the Convent of St. Mary. The house is a large, red-brick edifice, and it is surrounded by picturesque grounds, laid out in the most ornamental manner. Winding steps, cut in the rock, lead to terrace after terrace, where the

most charming views of the surrounding country can be obtained; and grottoes and summer-houses afford rest and shelter. Flowers of every hue add to the beauty of the scene, and the song of the birds is heard from every tree; but the more lovely is the spot, so much the more is the restraint felt when you reach, on every side, high ungainly walls, that form a complete barrier to the outside world, so rich in beauty: the birds that sing so sweetly may fly over it, and continue their strain; but the poor black-robed nuns, who pace the prescribed limits, must sigh in vain for the delights of freedom. That large mansion, and those grounds so highly embellished, are in reality a prison, where the inmates are incarcerated, not for a few short months or irksome years, but for *life;*—a prison from which nothing can release them but that universal deliverer, *death.*

About twenty years ago, one lovely evening in June, a post-chaise drove up to the principal hotel in T——; and two persons, an elderly gentleman, tall and soldierly in appearance, and a slight young girl, descended from it, and entered the hotel. Late in the evening Captain Seward, having sent his daughter to her room, paid a long visit to the priest

of the parish, and the next morning he removed, with his daughter and their luggage, to private lodgings recommended by the priest. Emily Seward was an only child, and during her father's prolonged absence with his regiment, she had been the joy and comfort of her mother, who was a confirmed invalid. With the most tender care Emily devoted herself to her suffering parent until death released her from her long and painful illness; and then, worn out with fatigue, mental and bodily, she was taken to the house of her father's sister, where she was to remain until his return home. Here quite a new atmosphere and new scenes surrounded her; and, as soon as she recovered from the sorrow occasioned by her mother's death, she began to take a lively interest in the pleasures and amusements so abundant in her new home. Her aunt and cousins were pleasant, intelligent people, and enjoyed the good things of life without abusing them; but it was to her cousin Edward her heart expanded most. Secluded in a sick room almost completely until her nineteenth year, she had not had any opportunity of seeing strangers, more particularly gentlemen, and Edward appeared to her to be all that was fascinating as a companion, and admirable as a man; and,

for an unformed girl, unable to make comparisons, her judgment was very correct, for Edward Stanley was a well educated, high-principled young man, honest-hearted, and full of generous warmth; and, if Emily saw cause to admire and love his qualities of head and heart, he, too, could understand and appreciate her disinterested, unselfish character, and he soon learned to love her as she deserved to be loved. Mrs. Stanley saw with satisfaction the attachment that had sprung up between Edward and Emily; and, as they did not make any secret of it, she expressed her approval warmly, telling them, however, that they must not enter into any engagement until the return of Captain Seward, who had retired on half-pay, and was now travelling in Spain for the benefit of his health. The climate of India, acting on a not very strong constitution, had shattered his general health very much; and the news of the death of his wife, arriving just as he was about to return home, brought on an illness that had almost ended in death. The one great feeling of Captain Seward's life had been his love for his wife, and with her died out of his heart almost every remnant of affection for friend or relative. He had been separated from his sister since his boyhood, and

had hardly considered her existence until he heard that his child was living under her roof. For Emily his feelings were very undefined. At an early age she had been sent home from India, and, until her mother was obliged to come to England in consequence of ill health, she had been at a boarding school; and now that she was with his sister, and he was assured well taken care of, he did not feel inclined to trouble himself with a young girl almost unknown to him, and for whose sake he might be called upon to exert himself.

By nature Captain Seward was stern, cold, and resolute. Few things, if any, touched his heart except his one absorbing passion, the intense love he had borne his wife. This, with a strong reverential feeling for religion, might be said to bound and limit his capability of feeling; so that it was quite a relief to him to know that his daughter was safe with his sister; and he wrote the latter a grateful letter of thanks for her kindness to his child, and announced his intention of travelling in Spain to recruit his health. After a month's stay in Madrid, Captain Seward resolved to go quietly through the country for a year, staying where he pleased, and finding what distraction he could from his grief.

But before many weeks an attack of ague and fever reduced him to the weakness of an infant; and he was taken care of by the monks of a monastery near which he had become ill, and tended as if he were a brother, instead of the heretic that they discovered him to be from his ravings during the fever. For many weeks the Brothers of St. Joseph were assiduous in their attentions; and, often as the languid invalid lay dreamily gazing on the dim twilight, a softly-modulated strain of music, now breathing on the air, now swelling into bursts of harmonious sound, would come stealing through the cloisters, and die gradually away, filling the whole soul with its melting cadences, and subduing the stern soldier's heart beneath its influence, until unrestrained tears flowed from his eyes. As he became better, he loved to take his place in a dark corner of the convent chapel, and listen to the solemn chanting of the monks; and, one memorable evening, when the mass for the dead was performed with all its accompanying ceremonial of incense and requiems, his soul yielded to the subduing influence of the scene, and, to the joy of the monks, who had carefully noted every change and phase of feeling in their guest, and suited their plans to it, he sank

among the worshippers, and from that hour was, if possible, a more zealous and devoted Roman Catholic than the most sincere among his hosts. Fasting and penance were for the present forbidden by the wily men who had led him on step by step to the profession of their faith; but his grief had found a means of assuaging itself in prayers for his dead wife, and nearly his whole time was spent either in the library or in the chapel, where, in a half-entranced state, he listened for hours to the deep tones of the organ pealing through the arched aisles, and the soft, flute-like notes of the acolytes floating like angel voices through the air, blending their thrilling sweetness with the deeper voices of the monks as they joined the swelling chorus. In this life he forgot home and friends, until his continued absence induced his sister to write, and tell him the important news that her son and his daughter waited but for his sanction to become engaged to each other. The suddenness of the intimation roused his mind to a more than usual state of activity, and he hastened to the prior's room to ask his advice as to how he should act.

The prior mused for several minutes before replying, apparently studying the contents of Mrs.

Stanley's letter, which he held in his hand, but. in reality, pondering on the best method of inducing Captain Seward to act on the suggestion he was about to make. At last he said, "Of course, Captain Seward, your daughter and Mr. Stanley are Protestants; if she marries, is it your wish that she should continue to be a Protestant? I can hardly think so; for, now that you know and rejoice in our most holy faith, I am sure that you would desire your child to enter the true fold. As a heretic, you know, she is lost."

"I had not thought of that," cried out the aroused father; "I thought but of the necessity for my leaving this blessed place, where I had hoped to end my days; but now I see it must be done. My child, the daughter of my beloved Ellen, must be saved at all risks; but what to do I know not, for her heart appears to be entirely given to her cousin."

"That again is wrong; they are within the prohibited degrees," observed the prior; "but, brother, do not despair, I see a way out of this difficulty. You must first go to England, and see for yourself if your daughter's mind can be disengaged from this young man, and, if you can induce her to give

up her heretical opinions, and become a member of the true church; and at first, until you ascertain how far you can influence her, it may be as well for you not to avow your change of religion; if she hears you, and is led by you, as she should be, all is well; but, if she should prove contumacious, and that you find it may be necessary to exert your authority as a parent, I have thought of a plan which will, I have no doubt, prove efficacious. This I shall reveal to you before you leave us; and, after you have, as I fear you will have to do, put it in practice, I shall hope to see you return to live and die, as you have desired, amongst us." A solemn benediction closed the conversation, and Captain Seward retired to prepare for his sudden journey.

CHAPTER II.

THE SURPRISE.

One lovely evening in the end of July, Mrs. Stanley, with her family, were taking their tea on the lawn, when a post chaise drove up, and a tall thin gentleman, alighting from it, advanced to the party. As he drew near, Mrs. Stanley rose to meet him; and to her surprise he addressed her as "Emma."

"Surely," she said, "you are not Edward—my brother?"

"Yes, Emma, I am Edward; which of those young ladies is my daughter?"

Chilled by his manner, notwithstanding her ardent desire to embrace her father, Emily came quickly forward and greeted him, but was driven back into herself by the ceremonious salute he bestowed upon her. That fair young face, earnest in its outgushing tenderness, might have softened even the heart of an enemy; but Emily had a worse foe than an enemy to contend with, for with an enemy she might be on

her guard, but in her father she had one whom she believed to be her best friend; and believing himself to be so, he was prepared to act the most cruel part to bend her to his will.

As Mrs. Stanley, in a commotion of sisterly and hospitable feeling, hastened to the house to provide a fitting room for her long absent brother, Captain Seward seated himself beside Edward, and, while apparently speaking with interest of the countries in which he had travelled, was in reality measuring his mental standard and weighing the probability of inducing his daughter to give him up; but every moment this prospect became more remote, for the young people had been so unaccustomed to disguise their real feelings, that every word and look spoke of the deep affection with which they regarded each other. As this certainty forced itself on Captain Seward's mind, he became gradually silent, and all parties felt it a relief when Mrs. Stanley appeared and summoned them indoors.

Early the next morning Captain Seward was up, and pacing the lawn with long, even steps. Seeing his daughter look from her window, he beckoned her down, and offering her his arm led her to a

distant seat where they could converse unobserved. At first his questions were on general matters, but at last he inquired, "How do you like your aunt's family, Emily? The girls seem quiet and well-mannered, and Edward is a fine manly fellow, as far as I can see. As for your aunt herself, she is a nice, lady-like woman; I had quite forgotten her, it is so many years since we met?"

"Oh, papa! I like them all so much," said Emily, with enthusiasm. "My aunt is so truly kind, and the girls are so affectionate. And—and Edward——"

"Well, what of Edward?" inquired her father composedly, as he scrutinized her blushing, downcast face.

Poor Emily dared not look up, and she knew not how to reply. With her aunt and cousins she could speak freely of her love for Edward, and praise all his many gifts and talents; but with this cold, ceremonious stranger it was entirely different, and the words died away upon her lips as she tried to utter them.

"I suppose," remarked her father, after a pause, "I may infer from your silence, that your aunt has informed me correctly as to the position of affairs

between you and your cousin; but, Emily, you should consider, or rather you should have considered, that I had to be consulted before you gave yourself up to any fancied partiality for any young man, but more especially so near a relative."

"But, dear papa," burst forth Emily, "it was quite unintended at first, and then my aunt approved of it, and said she was sure that you would do so; and—and—oh, father! do not say that you do not, for I love Edward with my whole heart."

"Well, do not distress yourself; we shall speak on the subject some other time," said her father, leading the conversation to other subjects, and contriving to draw out her mind fully on the important one of religion. To his dismay he learned that Emily's whole soul and feelings were deeply imbued with the spirit of Protestantism. She had not attended church or read her Bible as a form, and every word so skilfully drawn from her impressed upon her father the conviction that any attempt to draw her from her allegiance to the church which she believed to be the exponent of God's word would be fruitless. Incidentally she mentioned that Edward was only waiting to complete his twenty-third year to be ordained; and, in the ardour of the

moment, she forgot to whom she was speaking, and dwelt with delight on the life of usefulness she hoped to lead as his wife, and on the good they hoped to do when settled in a parish. This speech put to flight any remorse Captain Seward might have felt as to carrying out the plan concocted by the prior of St. Joseph's. And while poor Emily expatiated in glowing language on her looked-for future, she little knew that every word she uttered was turning its brightness into the blackness of night.

A fortnight of a constraint that was felt, although not commented upon, dragged slowly by; and, one morning at breakfast, after he had read a voluminous letter from Spain, Captain Seward announced that he must start the next day for a distant part of the country. A general feeling of relief was experienced by his hearers, which was quickly succeeded by dismay, when they heard that he intended taking Emily with him; and, as for Emily, she felt shocked to think that she could shrink from the idea of a journey with her only parent—the father she had so anxiously desired to see.

The parting scene with her aunt and cousins was a very painful one; and, as the post chaise

swept out of the lawn, and she waved a last adieu to Edward, who stood watching her with anxious looks, she sank back in the carriage and burst into tears. An undefinable sense of loneliness filled her heart, and a dread of some unknown, unseen danger fell upon her spirit. While Emily wept unrestrainedly, her father opened a book and read. If she could have looked over his shoulder she would have seen with surprise that it was a Breviary; but, poor girl, she did not think of looking at either him or the book, her whole thoughts were concentrated on the scene she had left—one beloved object filling the foreground of the picture.

A weary journey of three days, among cross-roads, and through obscure villages, at length brought the travellers to the town of T——, and here Captain Seward intended to open the campaign against his unsuspecting child. During the journey he had been very silent, pondering on what course he should take. The letter he had received from the prior the day he announced his intended departure from his sister's house, contained full instructions as to how he should act, and conveyed a letter of introduction to the parish priest at T——, who had also been written to to prepare him for Captain Seward's visit.

Emily was very much astonished to see her father on such intimate terms with a gentleman of whom she had never heard him speak; but her surprise was greatly increased when, on the first Sunday of their stay at T——, her father led her into the Roman Catholic house of worship instead of the Protestant one. Thinking he had made a mistake, she ventured to whisper to him: "Father, this is not our church." But with a warning gesture to her to desist from speaking, he fell on his knees crossing himself (as it is called) in the most devout manner, and giving himself up entirely to the ceremony that was going on. Emily was greatly shocked and puzzled by this strange conduct, and at last a firm conviction took possession of her mind that grief and illness combined, had unsettled her father's intellect. This solution of the difficulty seemed also to cast a ray of light on all that had distressed and chilled her in his manner; and, trying to cheer herself with the hope that by love and care she might yet see him restored to perfect health and sanity, she sat watching his bowings and crossings with mingled pity and affection.

Mr. Devine, the priest, had been invited to dine with them; and when Emily moved to retire after

dinner, her father requested her to remain, saying he did not feel very well, and would go to his room for an hour. With all the ease and politeness of a man of the world, Mr. Devine led the conversation; and Emily was delighted with his varied information and the fund of thought and discrimination he brought to bear on men and things. By degrees the tone of the conversation altered; and, while entirely unable to account for how it had been brought about, Emily found herself deep in a theological argument, in which, while seeing the light, she seemed to be feeling her way through a thick darkness that obscured her mental vision, and enabled the priest to say, as tea was announced, "You see, my dear young lady, you have been looking at things from a wrong point of view, and therefore your arguments, though skilfully put, cannot stand; but, with your fine intellect and quick powers of discernment, I feel assured you will not long continue to think as you now do."

Before Emily could answer, her father entered the room, and the conversation became general. Mr. Devine and Captain Seward having travelled over most of the habitable globe, their accounts of different countries and manners were very interesting;

and in listening to them Emily almost forgot the subject that had so excited her feelings a few minutes before. But in the silence of her chamber she thought long and deeply on her conversation with the priest; his skilful manner of making wrong appear right, and right wrong, confusing her perceptions, and leading her to wonder if it were *possible* that his views were sound, and hers of necessity false. Bewildered at last by the cunning sophistry that had been brought to bear upon her, Emily took refuge in sleep, hoping that morning would enable her to come with fresh energies to the consideration of the subject.

CHAPTER III.

NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

"WHAT a beautiful hill that is, and how well that house is situated," Captain Seward remarked the next day to Mr. Devine.

"Yes," he replied, "there is a splendid view from the hill, and especially from that house; it is the Convent of St. Mary; the grounds alone are worth a visit; I wish I could induce Miss Seward to take a walk there; she would be well repaid for her trouble, for the view from that high terrace is really magnificent."

"I should like it very much," said Emily, delighted at the idea of seeing a convent, and perhaps speaking to the nuns; "but will it not be an intrusion?"

"Certainly not, my dear young lady; the sisters will be rejoiced to see you, and the reverend mother is a most agreeable, accomplished woman."

"When can you make it convenient to walk with us there?" enquired Captain Seward.

"Oh, there is no time like the present, if Miss

Seward is not otherwise engaged," said the priest gaily; "and my time is my own to-day."

"I shall be ready in a few minutes," said Emily; and within half an hour the party were on their way to the hill.

On arriving at the gates of the convent grounds, Mr. Devine rang the bell, and almost immediately a lay sister, clad in black robes, with a small veil over her cap, unfastened the side door and admitted the visitors; with bent head she led the way to the house, where, ringing a bell as she entered, she ushered them into a small room, well, but plainly furnished, and ornamented by a beautiful painting of the Virgin and Child. The most perfect stillness reigned through the house as the visitors stood looking from a window that commanded a picturesque view of the town; not a sound broke the silence until the slight rustling of a dress beside her caused Emily to turn quickly, when she perceived that a graceful looking woman, clad in the full flowing robes of a nun, had entered the room unobserved and was standing ready to receive them.

"Allow me to introduce Captain and Miss Seward," said Mr. Devine, coming forward to greet her; "I have brought them to see you, and also the beautiful view from the terrace."

"Your friends are very welcome," replied the reverend mother (for it was the lady superior herself); "and I shall be happy to show them the view after they have rested themselves. Have you been long in this neighbourhood?" she asked, turning to Emily.

"A very few days," replied Emily, startled from her contemplation of the dress and countenance of the reverend mother, whom she had been intently regarding during the time she had been addressing Mr. Devine; and never was face, figure or manner more worthy of attention. Mrs. Ellerby (for so she was called by those not under her rule) was tall and slight, long flowing black robes setting off the graceful outlines of her figure, and adding dignity to her movements; her features were long and regular, and her colour that peculiar creamy tint that is so still and delicate, yet far removed from denoting delicacy in its possessor; the straight white band across her forehead almost seemed to enhance the beauty of the well-shaped brow and delicately defined eyebrows that lay beneath it; but in her eyes and smile lay the fascination that made her irresistible. Usually the lids drooped over those lovely eyes, and the long black lashes literally rested on her

cheeks; her mouth was perhaps a little too tightly closed; but what a change was visible in that apparently impassive face, when the lips, parting in a smile, revealed the white, even rows of teeth within, and two lurking dimples near the corners of her mouth gave an almost magical sweetness to her expression! Then the raised eyelids gave to view the soft black velvet-like orbs, that seemed to enchain the gaze, and draw the beholder as by a hidden power or spell under their marvellous influence. Such was their effect on Emily as she addressed her; and, almost bewildered by the novelty of her sensations, she could scarcely utter the few words of her reply. She little knew that the question was merely asked to mislead her, and that her whole history and position were more intimately known to her questioner than by herself.

"I must hope that your stay will be a long one, and that you will frequently come to see me," said the superior in a soft insinuating voice, as her eyes seemed to penetrate into Emily's very soul, and draw forth as by magnetism a responsive thrill.

"You are very kind indeed," replied Emily; "and I shall be only too glad to come as often as you will allow me."

A half smile passed between her father and the priest as she spoke; but Emily did not perceive it, and the lay sister coming in with a tray of cake and wine turned the conversation into an entirely different channel. Emily was desirous of knowing something of the working of the convent; and Mrs. Ellerby described to her in glowing language the love and peace that existed within its walls, the pure, devoted affection of the sisters to each other, and the happiness they enjoyed among themselves. "You hear them now," she said smiling, as, directly after a gong sounded through the house, merry voices and ringing laughs were heard along the stairs and corridors, and in another minute groups of nuns and novices were seen scattered through the walks, some of the older nuns walking sedately along, while others, more juvenile or gay, ran races, and swung each other in large ornamental swings placed in the grounds; while the girls who were being educated in the convent joined the games, and swelled the peals of laughter by their own gleeful mirth.

"It is the hour for recreation, and you see they all enjoy it thoroughly," observed Mrs. Ellerby, as Emily looked from the window astonished at the

scene. "I suppose you thought nuns were always gloomy; but, my dear Miss Seward, I assure you they are far from it, as you may see; and if true happiness can be found, it is in a convent, where no care ever disturbs the mind. If you are sufficiently rested we shall now walk through the grounds."

"Quite rested, thank you," said Emily, rising; "but I am greatly surprised at what I have seen. I mean," she added, becoming confused at expressing her opinion so plainly, "I did not think that any amusement was permitted in a convent."

"Then you were greatly mistaken, my dear young lady. I assure you we have amusement in abundance at the proper times; but those times are regulated so as not to interfere with our duties, and we enjoy pleasure the more when we have discharged our duties properly. Is it not so?"

Emily assented warmly, as they stepped out on the lawn, and sauntered through the beautifully kept gardens and grounds.

"Those gardens belong to the sisterhood, and those to the children," said Mrs. Ellerby, pointing to a piece of ground separated from the rest. "You see they all exercise their own taste; and there is always a good-natured rivalry as to whose garden

looks best. It is a very healthful amusement and very pleasurable also."

"How happy they must be working there together," replied Emily, who viewed the bright side of the picture through the new mental lens provided by her companion. "I had no idea that so much enjoyment was allowed to nuns."

"Ah! you will understand us better, when you know more of us," responded the reverend mother gaily, as, turning a corner where a rockery covered with ferns and flowering plants gave the place a wild appearance, they suddenly stood on the highest terrace, where a perfectly panoramic view of th surrounding country was spread before them.

Both Captain Seward and Emily had a keen appreciation of the beauties of nature; and they stood gazing almost entranced on the extreme loveliness of the scene that was so suddenly presented to their view. At last Emily said, turning to Mrs. Ellerby, "Oh, how happy you must be to live in this delightful place; it is like paradise."

Smiling gently at the enthusiastic girl, the superior only replied, "It is a delightful place, and you must come as often as you can to enjoy it while you remain at T——."

Captain Seward and the priest had furtively watched every change in Emily's expressive countenance since the moment of her introduction to the reverend mother; and, well satisfied with the result of their experiment so far, they prepared to say good-bye to their agreeable entertainer, fearing anything might occur to lessen the favourable impression that had evidently been made on Emily's mind.

Having promised to repeat her visit very soon, in answer to the renewed invitation of Mrs. Ellerby, Emily, with her father and Mr. Devine, took their leave; and, during the walk home, she was sunk in a thoughtful reverie, during which Captain Seward and Mr. Devine conversed on different topics, leaving her to the undisturbed enjoyment of her meditations, half-persuading themselves that the net they had so cleverly woven was closing its meshes round her. They were right in imagining that Emily was agreeably and most favourably impressed with what she had seen and heard at the convent; but they did not know that her imagination only was charmed, and that she enjoyed the visit only as a break in on the monotony of her life with her father. She had written twice to her aunt, and to

Edward, but greatly to her surprise had not heard from either of them in reply; she would, however, have ceased to wonder at their apparent neglect had she known that her letters, instead of being posted, had been opened and read by her father, to whom she had entrusted them, and who, after having in this manner possessed himself of her thoughts and wishes, had burnt the letters, thus making sure that no discovery could take place. In the meantime the party at "The Grove" were wondering at Emily's unaccountable conduct in not writing to them; and, as Captain Seward had not given them any address, promising to write as soon as they should reach their destination, they were without any means of knowing where to write to her; the post-boy who had driven the first chaise having been sent home from the first halting-place, so that even that means of tracing them was lost. As week followed week, Mrs. Stanley and her daughters became more grieved and perplexed at not hearing from Emily; and Edward, who suffered intensely, at length determined on trying to discover their route by going to the village from which Jem the post-boy had been sent back. But all his efforts were unavailing; the inn from whence they had proceeded

further was closed in consequence of the landlord's death; and the post-boy had emigrated to Australia, so that clue was also lost. Poor Edward returned home, still hoping that a letter might have arrived in his absence; but no such comfort awaited him; and, completely worn out by anxiety, he was seized with a long and dangerous illness that left him for months a confirmed invalid.

During those first weeks Emily wrote frequently to her aunt, and also to Edward; but invariably her father contrived to retain the letters, sometimes taking them from her hand at the post-office, and apparently dropping them into the letter-box, while in reality he concealed them in his sleeve and posted some letters of his own already prepared for the purpose; although Emily had not the most remote suspicion of it, every action of hers was closely watched by her father and Mr. Devine; and, under a pretext of preventing her walks being lonely, she was always accompanied on them by either of the gentlemen; thus she had not a chance of posting a letter unobserved; and the servant, being under the priest's orders, always gave any with which she was entrusted to Captain Seward, who after having examined those addressed to school friends, etc., to be

sure that they did not contain enclosures, posted them; and the fact that she received letters in reply to hers from all her other friends, caused Emily at last to begin to imagine that her aunt and cousins had ceased to love her; and, her pride taking the alarm, she at length with many bitter tears came to the conclusion that she would not write again to those who treated her with such indifference and neglect. By the cessation of her letters, her father perceived with joy that his plans had begun to take effect; and, as he knew all her school friends were strangers to the family at "The Grove," he had no fears of any discovery being made through their means.

In her feeling of loneliness at the apparent desertion of those she so much loved, Emily turned to the new friend who seemed so interested in her, and scarcely a day passed in which she did not visit the convent. Gradually Mrs. Ellerby drew from her the particulars of the sorrow that weighed upon her heart, artfully contriving to poison her mind against her friends, and to inflame her pride, while sympathizing in her sorrow. Little did poor Emily know that all these conversations were planned and designed by the reverend mother and the priest, and

that, while pretending to enter into her feelings and sympathise with her, the cruel woman was inwardly rejoiced at every thorn that rankled in her breast, and under a garb of friendship pressed the point more keenly home.

Nor was the priest idle; for, while Mrs. Ellerby by flattery of the most insinuating kind obtained a powerful influence over Emily's mind, he in another way had made himself appear one of her best friends, and, actuated solely by an ardent desire for her spiritual welfare, as he assured her, he took advantage of every opportunity to enter upon the subject of religion, and by specious sophistries so worked upon her mind, that until she fled to the Bible, the unerring guide, as a reference, her reason was frequently clouded, and her imagination taken captive by the ensnaring nature of his arguments.

Captain Seward watched the struggle with impatience, so desirous was he to return to the monastery in Spain; and one evening he determined that the next day should decide his plans as regarded his daughter, and for this purpose he held a long conference with Mr. Devine, the result of which was that, immediately after breakfast the next morning, the priest opened a conversation on the superior

excellence of the Roman Catholic Church, by challenging Emily to the proof of how she could maintain that the Protestant Church was in any way equal to it. Driven from point to point by arguments with which she could not cope, Emily again fell back upon her one test of truth, the Bible, and from its pages steadily opposed the doctrines so pressed upon her.

"You pretend to be wiser than many learned and good men, Miss Seward," said the priest; "but this perversion of the meaning of the Bible only shows more plainly the danger of giving it into such hands as yours."

"But sir," replied Emily gently, "the Bible itself teaches differently. We are told to 'search the Scriptures;' and who should presume to hinder when God commands?"

"That was only addressed to the Apostles, Miss Seward; and they were to teach the people from them."

"Excuse me, Mr. Devine; we are told that Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures 'from a child,' and that they are to make us 'wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.'"

"But you forgot that Christ appointed priests and Apostles over his church, and that it is through

them the people are to be instructed, and they are to take from their mouths the doctrines of the church."

"Yes, as far as they are in accordance with the word of God. Paul tells us in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in the 5th verse of the last chapter, to 'examine' ourselves whether we 'be in the faith;' and the Bible is given us as the test by which to prove ourselves. In the 6th chapter of Galatians he also says, 'Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another;' and again in Thessalonians, First Epistle and 5th chapter, he says, '*Prove* all things, hold fast that which is good;' and, in writing to Timothy, in the 3rd chapter he tells him, 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.'"

"Just so, my dear young lady," said the priest eagerly, "'for reproof, correction and instruction;' you see they are to be used by the priesthood in this way for the good of the laity; that is precisely what I say; you are proving my case exactly; they never were meant to be used by the people to, as the Bible says, 'wrest them to their own destruction.'"

"That only means Mr. Devine, as the Apostle

says, the 'unlearned and the unstable,' meaning those unlearned in God's law, and unstable in his doctrines. So far from the priesthood only being intended to have the Scriptures in their hands, Paul says to Timothy, 'From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus;' and we are told in the 19th Psalm, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, *making wise the simple.*' Again, Paul says in the 15th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope;' and in his instructions to believers in the last chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians he says, 'And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'"

"You have said a great deal about the *use* of the Scriptures, Miss Seward; but you cannot show me any command in the Bible that it is to be read by the laity," said the priest, in an irritated tone.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, there are several

places in the Bible in which it is expressly mentioned."

"I should like to see them," said Mr. Devine, incredulously. "I must be very stupid, as I have never discovered them yet; and I think I know as much of the Bible as you do, young lady."

Emily again opened her little Bible, and turning to the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy, she read, "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

"Oh," said the priest impatiently, "that was addressed to the Israelites, and was meant as a warning at a particular time."

"David says," said Emily, turning to the Psalms, "in his 1st Psalm, speaking of a righteous man, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;' and the whole of the 119th Psalm is full of exhortations to study God's word closely."

"We all know that that was under the old dispensation, Miss Seward; but under the new you will not find any such doctrines."

"In that passage of John which I quoted before, we have a positive command," said Emily, "'Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me;' and Peter at the end of his Second Epistle writes, 'This Second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour.' You see, Mr. Devine, the first command comes direct from the Saviour, to all men, the second is written by his inspired Apostle; and we know that all the Scriptures are addressed to the world at large, and not only to the priesthood."

"How do you know that Peter wrote so?" demanded the priest; "he may have been writing—and most probably was — to the heads only of the churches."

"Oh, Mr. Devine, if you look at the beginning of each of his Epistles, you will see at once that he wrote to all. The first begins, 'Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia;'

and the second thus, 'Simon Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' Oh, Mr. Devine, it is a fearful thing to deprive people of the word of God. In John our Saviour says, 'He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day;' and, if people are prevented reading that holy word, surely the wrath of God will fall on those that withhold it from them. Christ says, 'I am the way, and the truth and the life;' 'If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.'"

"You are quoting the Bible very cleverly," said the priest, bitterly; "but the people are to come to those appointed to teach them these things, that they may learn what to believe."

"The Apostle says, in his 12th chapter of the Romans, that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;' and David says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' Surely, Mr. Devine, they knew the right way;

and they taught others where to seek it also. Oh think how many sinking hearts have been cheered, and sick beds made easy, by the soothing, life-giving words of the Bible, and I am sure you would not wish to keep it from the poor and miserable. Our Saviour himself says, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;' and then, how tender is his invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' In the Protestant Church this is the doctrine taught—free and full salvation through Christ; every sinner is invited to read the precious promises and encouragements of the gospel for himself, and to depend fully and solely on the Saviour, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.'"

"I see you are turning the attack upon me," said the priest; "may I ask what you see in my church that is wrong according to your ideas of the

Bible, now that you have proved that *your* church is right, so much to your own satisfaction."

The sneering manner in which the question was put roused Emily to reply to the best of her ability; and, taking up her Bible she said, "I think I can point out a few things at least, that are contrary to the Bible, and that are plainly described as marks of heresy. We read, for instance, in First Timothy, 4th chapter and 3rd verse, as marks of apostacy, 'Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats.' Now, the Roman Catholic Church is the only one that insists on those two commands. Priests and nuns are forbidden to marry, and all the people are ordered to abstain from meat on certain days; is not this contrary to the Bible?"

As Emily spoke, she raised her clear eyes to the priest's face, and was shocked at the expression she saw there. It was one she could not define, but it made her shrink from him instinctively.

"Then I suppose you mean to insinuate," the priest inquired, "that St. Peter, or any of the apostles, might have married if they had chosen?"

"Certainly," replied Emily, undauntedly; "nay, more, I assert that St. Peter *was* married."

"Impossible," cried the priest, beginning to lose

his temper; "you do not know what you are saying, and you are committing sin."

"Pardon me, I can prove to you that he really was married, and also some others at least, if not all the apostles;" and, turning over the leaves of her Bible, Emily read from First Corinthians, 9th chapter and 5th verse: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" "You see by this passage that St. Peter was married; you know Cephas was his name."

"It may be in your Bible, but I am sure it is not in mine," cried the priest, greatly exasperated. St. Paul said, 'Seek not a wife.' Can you deny that?"

"I do not deny it at all; but St. Paul spoke to people under peculiar circumstances at that time when the Church was young, and there was great persecution; but even then it was not a command, it was only advice, and was given to people generally, and not to the priesthood. On the contrary, he ordered priests to be married."

"Very good indeed," laughed the priest, sarcastically; "and pray where is *that* delectable doctrine to be found?"

"In his First Epistle to Timothy, 3rd chapter and 2nd verse," said Emily, quietly referring to the place. 'A Bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.' And in the 4th verse he adds: 'One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?' And again, he says, in the 12th verse: 'Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well;' so you see both orders of the clergy were named, Mr. Devine."

"I see more than ever the danger of putting the Bible into ignorant hands," cried the priest; "it is the command of the Church that priests should not marry."

"And that I have shown you in the Bible is one of the marks of the Apostate Church," said Emily, steadily; "just as our blessed Lord told the Pharisees their worship was vain while they taught for doctrines the commandments of men."

"I cannot listen any longer, your language is an insult to the Church, Miss Seward," exclaimed the priest.

"I should be sorry to offend you," said Emily,

gently; "but you challenged me to the proof, and when I venture on it you get angry. I have only given you obvious marks as pointed out by the word of God, but the *doctrines* taught by the Church of Rome are unscriptural in their very essence. Praying to saints and angels, for instance, is denounced in the Bible."

"Where, pray?" inquired Mr. Devine.

"In Colossians, 2nd chapter and 18th verse, it is said: 'Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels.' And in the Revelation, in the last chapter, we are told by John: 'When I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.' So you see, Mr. Devine, it is positively forbidden."

"Have you any other charge against my Church?" asked the priest, smothering his rage in order to draw out a full avowal of her feelings.

"Yes; confessing to priests, and receiving forgiveness of sins from them, when we are told that 'To the Lord, our God, belong mercies and forgive-

ness.' Then there is the doctrine of purgatory, which is also most unscriptural. The penitent sinner, if he repents and believes on Christ, becomes eternally happy the moment he dies. Our Saviour said to the dying thief who believed on him, 'Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' Jesus is as powerful to save now as he was then; and all who die believing on him, no matter how great their sins have been, go immediately into his presence. The Apostle Paul says, 'Willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.' If the soul is 'present with the Lord,' it cannot be in purgatory."

"You are a good advocate of bad doctrines," said the priest, bitterly; "your arguments only prove the pride and vanity that will not submit to the teaching of the Church."

"I do not think you judge me correctly, Mr. Devine," replied Emily, mildly; "and if 'truth' is what we seek, surely you should not object to my referring to the Bible, the unerring standard of all truth."

"It is not for me to object to anything you may choose to do, Miss Seward," said the priest, with mock humility; "you do not belong to my flock,

and as I believe you have come to the end of your list of the evil teaching of my Church, I shall say good morning."

"I had *not* come to an end of the list," said Emily, smilingly, "I had some grave charges still to make; but, if you are unwilling to continue the conversation, I shall not force it upon you."

"Oh, I thought our misdemeanours had reached a climax; but, as there are still some other evil charges to be made against us, I must ask you to name them at another time, as I have an appointment just now; so once more good morning."

"Good morning, Mr. Devine; I trust we part as good friends as ever, notwithstanding my venturing an attack on your outworks," said Emily, laughing, as she extended her hand.

"Oh, of course, it is all fair; I commenced the attack, you know," said the priest," as he shook hands with her. But, when he closed the door behind him, a malignant scowl crossed his face, and he shook his clenched hand in the direction of where he had left Emily standing, muttering, as he did so: "I shall soon bring you to your senses, my lady, when I get you into my power;" and, striding out of the house, he met Captain Seward, who had

evidently been waiting for him. And as they paced slowly along he recounted the entire conversation, and expressed by voice and gesture some advice that seemed quite in accordance with Captain Seward's views; for, after a cordial grasp of the hand, they separated, the priest walking quickly towards the "Hill," and Captain Seward returning home to take Emily for a walk.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLOT DEVELOPED.

As Emily rose from the dinner-table that afternoon, her father said, "I am engaged to spend the evening with Mr. Devine; and, if you wish to go to see your friend, Mrs. Ellerby, you can do so."

"Thank you, papa; I should like to go very much," said Emily, as, hastening up stairs, she put on her walking dress, and immediately set out on her walk to the convent.

It was a lovely evening; the sun was sinking slowly over the hill, and the tall shadows of the trees fell across the road as Emily walked on. By degrees her rapid step grew slower as she lingered in a kind of half reverie, until, stopping altogether on a rustic bridge that crossed a little stream, she leant on the rail, and gazed dreamily at the rippling current below. Her thoughts were sad as she wandered in memory over her short life; the pleasant school days gone for ever, the long, sorrowful watching by the sick-bed of her mother, and, later,

breast. When all the seats were filled, solemn silence reigned for a few minutes, and then the sweet voices of the sisterhood rose softly as they chanted a hymn to the Virgin. Had it been to the Lord, the great giver of all goodness, how earnestly would Emily have joined in the strain; but the words of the hymn chilled all her devotional feelings as she heard them swell upon the air,—

"Hail, queen of heaven, the ocean star,
Guide of the wand'rer here below!
Thrown on life's surge we claim thy care,
Save us from peril and from woe.
Mother of Christ, star of the sea,
Pray for the wand'rer, pray for me.

"O gentle, chaste and spotless maid,
We sinners make our prayers through thee;
Remind thy Son that He has paid
The price of our iniquity.
Virgin most pure, star of the sea,
Pray for the sinner, pray for me.

"Sojourners in this vale of tears,
To the blest advocate we cry,
Pity our sorrows, calm our fears,
And soothe with hope our misery.
Refuge in grief, star of the sea,
Pray for the mourner, pray for me.

"And while to Him who reigns above,
In Godhead One, in Persons Three,
The source of life, of grace, of love,
Homage we pay on bended knee;
Do thou, bright queen, star of the sea,
Pray for thy children, pray for me."

The sounds died away in a solemn cadence; and, prostrating themselves on the ground, the sisters remained sunk in their devotions.

Prayers over, a bell sounded through the passage, and, retiring as they had come, with a complete prostration before the altar, the sisterhood left the chapel, and Emily returned to Mrs. Ellerby's room.

"I wonder," she said, after a few moments, "my father has not come for me; I have not heard the gate-bell sound."

"A message came from Captain Seward while we were in chapel to say that he could not call for you this evening," said Mrs. Ellerby, "and requesting that I would take care of you for the night."

"Not come for me! I hope he is not ill," cried Emily.

"Not at all; do not alarm yourself, he is quite

well—it is merely some matter of business that has detained him."

Thankful to have her fears allayed, Emily did not pause to enquire how it was that Mrs. Ellerby was so well informed; and, as the hour for retiring had arrived, she followed her conductor with some curiosity to the sleeping apartments. Her room was small, but scrupulously neat; the boards were as white as boards could be, and the narrow bed was covered with a counterpane as white as snow; the walls also were white, relieved only by an ebony crucifix that hung above her bed, beside which a small vessel of holy water was suspended.

Mrs. Ellerby bid her good night with a kind wish for her good repose; and Emily laid her head on the pillow, utterly unconscious that she was delivered over to her soft-spoken gaoler as complete a captive as though the walls of Newgate enfolded her.

CHAPTER V.

BONDAGE.

EMILY lay awake for over an hour, the novelty of her position preventing any desire to sleep; but gradually she sank into a dreamless slumber, which lasted until the loud sounding of a bell awoke her to consciousness. Startled suddenly from her sleep by so unusual a sound, she sprang up in bed, and for a moment stared in blank amazement at the small room with its plain furniture and white walls; but, recollecting immediately where she was, she hastened to dress herself, being anxious to see as much of convent life as she could during her visit, little suspecting that the visit was intended to pass into a life-residence within its walls.

At six o'clock another bell sounded; and, hearing the sisters passing her door, Emily joined them, and in silence entered the chapel. There was a short prayer, and then the sisters knelt in meditation for a prolonged period. As Emily sat looking

at the scene, the richly-decorated chapel, the kneeling figures of the nuns, and the solemn stillness, oppressed her with a feeling that almost produced tears, and her thanks ascended to God that she was not bound by the rules of a conventual life. The pale faces of the nuns, in their snowy wrappings, looked almost ghastly from fatigue as they rose from their painful posture, so long continued without the slightest motion or means of rest; but Emily afterwards discovered that they gloried in undergoing those sufferings, as they believed that "the more pain the more merit." A light breakfast was then sparingly partaken of, and the nuns separated for recreation for half an hour.

Mrs. Ellerby had seen Emily in the chapel, but had not addressed her until breakfast time, when she placed her beside her, and as usual paid her the kindest attention. As soon as the sisters retired, she enquired what Emily thought of a convent life so far as she had seen it.

Emily was too polite to speak all her thoughts, and yet too truthful to conceal altogether her distaste for it; therefore, after a moment's hesitation, she replied that her stay had been too short to allow her to be a judge of how she could like it for a continuance.

"Oh! that fault is easily remedied," said Mrs. Ellerby, laughing; "you have spent a night here, so you know how that is passed, stay and spend the day, and you will have seen our life as completely as though you had been here a year."

"Thank you," said Emily gratefully; you are very kind to allow me, a denizen of the outward world, to enter the penetralia in this manner, and see the actual working of your every-day life; and, if my father has not any objection, I shall return after I have made breakfast for him. It is now eight o'clock, and I can easily return before eleven."

"That is not necessary, my dear Miss Seward," said Mrs. Ellerby, while the peculiar smile that Emily had noticed the previous evening flitted over her face; "I have already sent a message to Captain Seward requesting permission for you to remain for the day, and see, here is his reply." As she spoke she took a note from her desk and handed it to Emily, who read it silently. It ran thus:—

"DEAR MADAM,—In reply to your polite wish that my daughter should be your guest for the day, I write to say that I shall be very happy to leave her under your kind care, more especially as I have some

engagements that will completely occupy my time for the next few days; therefore, if you will kindly permit her to remain with you during the time my business claims my attention, you will confer a considerable obligation on your faithful servant,

"H. SEWARD."

"Then it appears that I am to burden you with my company still longer, if you can have me," said Emily, smiling, as she returned the note.

"You well know what pleasure it gives me to enjoy your society, dear girl," said the superior caressingly; "but I must not forget my duties even with you. See, there are the sisters still in the garden, run away to them for a little time, for recreation will soon be over. Sister Mary Raymond," she added, to an elderly nun who had just entered the room, "be kind enough to conduct Miss Seward to the garden;" and, pressing a kiss on her forehead, she left the room.

"What do you think of our life here?" enquired Sister Mary Raymond, whose tall, angular figure stood gauntly erect before Emily, as she seemed to look through her with her piercing light grey eyes.

"I can hardly answer that question yet," replied Emily. "You know I have not been here long

enough to form on opinion on the subject; but I think you all seem to be very happy."

"Of course we do; why should we not be happy? said the nun; "but you are likely to have an opportunity of seeing that for yourself, I have been told."

"Yes, Mrs. Ellerby has kindly consented to take charge of me while my father is engaged by some business affairs."

"Humph," was the rather unsatisfactory response of Sister Mary Raymond, as she led her visitor to the garden, surveying her rather curiously as they passed along.

"Let me swing you," cried Sister Mary Agatha, a merry novice, as Emily appeared. "Do, Miss Seward; see, the cushion is arranged for you."

"No; come and look at my flowers, the roses are lovely," said Sister Mary Theresa, a tall, pale girl, with beautiful features.

"I think I prefer the flowers, if you will excuse me," said Emily, smiling at the novice.

"Oh certainly," she replied, laughing; "but you must try the swing another time; it is my special delight."

"Are you going to remain with us?" asked Sister Mary Theresa, as they walked away.

"Oh no; I am only a guest for a few days."

"You are happy to be free," replied the young nun with a deep sigh. "Never be tempted to give up your freedom, it is too precious a boon to be trifled with."

"I have never had any idea of it, I assure you," said Emily. "You do not perhaps know that I am a Protestant."

"A Protestant! Then why are you here?" enquired Sister Mary Theresa, in surprise.

"Only as a visitor for a day or two. I came to spend the evening of yesterday with Mrs. Ellerby; and my father was unable to come for me last night, as he had to attend to some business, with which he is still so much occupied, that, when Mrs. Ellerby wrote to him this morning for permission for me to remain for the day, he requested her to keep me for a few days if it did not inconvenience her."

"I am very glad to hear that we shall have you a little longer," said the nun. "You do not know what a relief it is to hear a little of that world from which we are so entirely shut in, and to refresh our ideas by exchanging thoughts with one who lives outside the convent walls. I little knew to what a monotonous life I was devoting myself when I came here."

"Why did you decide on being a nun?" asked Emily.

"I can hardly say that it was my own choice," replied Sister Mary Theresa. "I was an only child, and my father had been dead many years when my mother met with a fearful accident that resulted in her death. She lingered for some little time in great suffering of body, and also in distress of mind about me, as I had no near relatives to whom I could go. Suddenly she thought of this convent, where she had been educated, and of which Mrs. Ellerby, one of her school-fellows, was the superior; and she earnestly advised me to come here as soon as she should be removed from me. I came here the day after her funeral; and, in the depth of my grief, the sympathy of Mrs. Ellerby was so sweet that I clung to her as a second mother; and so, as I thought I should find comfort and happiness near her, I decided on taking the veil. I only learnt when it was too late that I had made a great mistake."

"I am truly sorry for you," said Emily, sympathizingly; "but could you not still return to the world?"

"How can I? My money is all gone—given up to the use of the convent, and I have no friend or relative to receive me."

"But you have the abilities that would enable you to earn money for yourself," said Emily, earnestly; "and freedom will be doubly welcome to you, now that you feel what it is to be deprived of it. You are still very young, and you can work."

"Yes, I am even younger than you would suppose. I am only twenty-three years of age," replied the nun, sadly. "What a long life of slow torture—a kind of living death, lies before me in all human probability," she added, while a shudder ran through her frame.

At this moment a bell rang out; and, starting from her seat beside Emily, the nun drew her veil round her face so as to conceal it a little, as she said hurriedly, "Do not breathe a word of all this," and, turning into the broad walk, joined the sisters who were hastening to the house.

Emily sat for some time thinking over the conversation so deeply that she started when a hand was laid on her shoulder, and, looking up, she saw Mrs. Ellerby standing beside her.

"Why so immersed in thought?" she asked, as Emily rose and walked with her. "You did not hear me approach."

If Emily had *seen* her approach she would have understood the reason why she could not have heard her, even though all her faculties had been on the alert. But she learnt before very long that in a convent every means is studied by which a knowledge may be obtained of what is going on in the hearts of its inmates; and the stealthy, cat-like tread of the reverend mother, as she paced gravelled walk and green sward alike with equal softness, taught her that faces can be read at their pleasure by those who make them their study, and who, stealing with velvet-shod footsteps upon the unwary dreamer, may learn in silence what the tongue would never reveal.

Perceiving that Emily hesitated, Mrs. Ellerby adroitly turned her question into a new channel. "Who have you chosen for a companion this morning?—and how have you amused yourself?" she enquired.

"I do not know the name of my companion," said Emily; "but she very kindly brought me to see her flowers."

"Ah, that is a vague description, I am afraid," replied the superior, smiling. "Was she tall or short, dark or fair? And where was her garden?"

"She was tall and very lovely," said Emily; "and I was sitting near her garden when you came."

"Oh, then, it was Sister Mary Theresa," remarked the reverend mother in her usual tone of voice; but inwardly her thoughts ran thus, "Now, I see why she was so absorbed in thought. I wonder what has that girl been saying to her; but I shall find out. I suspect she would be glad to leave us if she dared, or could find the means; but I shall keep my eye on her. I think," she added aloud, "you would like to see how we occupy our mornings; so we shall go at first into the schoolroom."

As she spoke Mrs. Ellerby opened a side door, and stepped into a long room arranged with desks and seats. About forty girls of different ages were seated at the desks, and twelve nuns were busily occupied in giving lessons in different branches of education.

"We must not interrupt the studies," whispered the superior as she withdrew, closing the door as

gently as she had opened it. "Now we shall visit the work-rooms."

The first room they entered presented a busy scene; piles of snowy linen, and of wearing apparel, were being looked through by some of the older nuns, while some younger ones were busily plying their needles in making and mending the things arranged for them. Leaving this room, Mrs. Ellerby led the way to another, where a number of the sisterhood were occupied in embroidering robes for priests, and dressing up little figures of the Virgin and St. Joseph. In a distant corner a group of novices were busily engaged arranging the clothing on little dolls, made to represent the infant Christ, that they might be laid in the Virgin's arms; while others were making shrines of painted card-board. Emily watched them rather curiously for some time, wondering how women in the full possession of their faculties could occupy their time in so frivolous a manner.

Again the bell sounded; and, laying down their work, a solemn demeanour taking the place of their light gossiping manner, the nuns passed in single file from the room, and through the long gallery to the chapel to adore the Host.

Dinner succeeded this service; and, as each nun seated herself at the table in order of priority, it was curious to notice the gradations of age, or convent life, in their faces. No speaking was permitted; but one of the sisters read aloud from the lives of the saints while the others dined.

After dinner work went on until noon, when the bell summoned the sisterhood again to the chapel to assist in the service called "sextes." This ended, the nuns read books, provided by the superior, until two o'clock, when some slight refreshment was taken, after which they attended another service called "nones."

As soon as the last-named service was concluded, a bell once more sounded, summoning the sisterhood to the room of the reverend mother, where Emily was sitting, feeling already quite fatigued from the various and yet monotonous duties of the day. Seating themselves round the walls, the nuns gave an account of what they had read and done during the morning, and received the instructions of the superior, after which they were dismissed to recreation.

The gardens presented an animated scene as Emily walked round with Mrs. Ellerby; some of

the nuns were running races, others stood in a laughing group round the swing, of which Sister Mary Agatha was evidently the presiding goddess, and a hum of voices from their little gardens showed that active life was there also. Leaving Emily with the party at the swing, Mrs. Ellerby withdrew to the house, her presence or absence not making any apparent difference in the deportment of the nuns, who were seemingly quite given up to amusement for the time being.

Emily looked round in vain for Sister Mary Theresa, wondering that she did not seek for her; but could she have visited the superior's private room she would have known the reason. Seated in her arm-chair, the reverend mother looked severely on the pale girl who stood meekly before her, apparently weighing how she should address her, but in reality studying her face and drawing her own conclusions.

"Daughter," she at last said, "why do you hold such conversations with one who is not yet one of us? Is it wise?—is it kind?—is it just?"

"What do you mean, my mother?" asked the nun, with downcast eyes.

"I ask you is it right of you to seek to prejudice

one, designed for a religious life, against its observances? If your own vain thoughts and foolish imaginings have interrupted the happy course of your life with us, is it proper for you to mislead one who may here find that happiness that the world has failed to afford?"

"What have I done, my mother?" again inquired the nun, as if mechanically.

"Daughter," said the superior in a severe tone, "it is dangerous to play with edged tools. Beware in time; let me not warn you in vain; retire and repeat the Litany to the Virgin until vespers."

Bending her head, Sister Mary Theresa left the room, in appearance stoically calm and self-controlled; but, on reaching her cell, she cast herself on her knees beside the bed, and a storm of sobs burst from her labouring heart. "Not one," she murmured, "not one to love me; not one to whom I can open my heart. Oh! when will this miserable being end?—when shall I be free from this thraldom?"

A heavy stupor, after a little while, seemed to come over her, and the unhappy girl lay prone under its influence until the bell sounded for vespers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PLAN LAID BARE.

When the nuns assembled for vespers, Emily looked eagerly round for Sister Mary Theresa, and at length discovered her almost hidden by a pillar, and looking even paler than usual. It was in vain to try to attract her notice, for her eyes were bent steadily on the ground; and, feeling that she did not mean to recognize her, Emily turned her attention to the service. The psalms were read, or rather chanted, and then followed a prayer, after which the silvery music of the hymn floated on the air so softly, that to enjoy it more thoroughly Emily closed her eyes; but, as on the former occasion, a chill feeling of disappointment stole over her heart as the words fell on her ears.

"Hail thou star of ocean!
Portal of the sky!
Ever Virgin Mother
Of the Lord most high!

"Oh! by Gabriel's ave,
Uttered long ago,
Eva's name reversing,
Stablish peace below.

"Break the captive's fetters;
Sight on blindness pour;
All our ills expelling,
Every bliss implore.

"Show thyself a mother;
Offer Him our sighs,
Who for us incarnate
Did not thee despise.

"Virgins of all Virgins!
To thy shelter take us;
Gentlest of the gentle!
Chaste and gentle make us.

"Still, as on we journey,
Help our weak endeavour;
Till with thee and Jesus
We rejoice for ever.

"Through the highest heaven,
To the Almighty Three,
Father, Son, and Spirit,
One same glory be. Amen."

Several prayers followed the anthem; and, after a short pause for reflection, the nuns retired from the chapel and assembled in the refectory for supper, during which, as at dinner, one of the sisters read aloud. After supper the reverend mother gave a kind of lecture on the reading, exhorting her hearers to imitate and emulate the virtues of the saints, of whom they had just heard such pious examples; at the close of her address, the bell sounded once more, and the nuns sought the chapel for complines. At this service Emily was again shocked by some of the prayers, and by the confession, which was made thus:—

"I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the Saints, and to you Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I beseech the blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you Father, to pray to the Lord our God for me."

The sweet hymn that followed the Psalms was however, very soothing; and she yielded her whole soul to its influence.

"Now with the fast departing light,
Maker of all! we ask of thee
Of thy great mercy, through the night,
Our guardian and defence to be.

"Far off let idle visions fly,
No phantom of the night molest;
Curb thou our raging enemy,
That we in chaste repose may rest.

"Father of mercies, hear our cry,
Hear us, O sole-begotten Son;
Who with the Holy Ghost most high,
Reignest while endless ages run."

At nine o'clock the nuns retired to their cells without Emily having been able to obtain even a glance from Sister Mary Theresa, who passed her without raising her eyes. Troubled by her apparent avoidance, for which she could not account, Emily laid her head on her pillow, and thought over the events of the day, until she dropped into a troubled sleep, from which she was roused by the bell calling up the nuns to the "*Officium Nocturnum.*" Too weary

to rise, she lay awake until she heard the sisterhood returning to their cells, and, hoping they might be able to resume their broken slumbers, Emily sank once more to rest.

Before sunrise the tormenting bell again summoned the sleepers to rise for the "laudes," after which they returned to their cells to make their beds before attending the six o'clock reading of the superior.

Two or three days passed in the same monotonous round, and still Emily had been unable to obtain a word with Sister Mary Theresa, who it was evident purposely avoided her. Greatly puzzled by such conduct, in one who had seemed so desirous of her society, and wondering at not receiving some message from her father, Emily became rather sad and thoughtful, and at the close of the week, she resolved to solve the first part of the mystery if possible. For this purpose she took her place in a small shrubbery near Sister Mary Theresa's garden, and watched anxiously for her approach. After some time the young nun drew near and listlessly looked at her flowers, taking off the dead leaves mechanically; stepping forward, Emily addressed her by name, and was amazed to see her start of avoid-

ance, and the look of almost dislike that crossed her face as she turned to move away.

"What have I done to offend you?" cried Emily, pressing to her side. "I can see plainly that I have (without knowing it, believe me), in some way incurred your displeasure. Do tell me my fault, if I have committed one?"

"If you have committed one?" replied the nun, a flush lighting up her pale cheek; "is it not a serious fault to receive confidence for the purpose of betraying it? Was it unknowingly that you repeated to the superior my wretched feelings?"

"*Do* you think I would basely repeat what you said, and reveal your sorrow to Mrs. Ellerby?" cried Emily, aghast. "If you could believe such a thing I do not wonder that you have avoided me. Oh, how could you have such an opinion of me?"

"Did you not walk with her immediately after I went into the house; and was not I the subject of your conversation?" inquired the nun, looking searchingly into Emily's face.

"Certainly, I walked with her," said Emily, surprised; "but I did not acquaint her with one word of our conversation. I shall tell you exactly what passed between us." And seeing that her

hearer was anxiously listening, Emily told her how Mrs. Ellerby had startled her from her thoughtful position and rallied her about it, detailing the precise words of their conversation.

"I see it all now," and I implore you to forgive my unkindness," said Sister Mary Theresa, as she pressed Emily's hand in hers; "but when you have heard her language to me, you will not wonder that I believed you had betrayed my confidence."

Emily listened to her recital in blank amazement. "What mystery is this!" she cried, at last; "why should she say that I am destined for a nun's life? she knows it to be untrue: there is something in all this that I do not understand."

"Then you really are not going to be a nun?" asked the sister, in equal surprise. "I confess that, accustomed as I now am to the deceits that are continually practised here, I was sure that Mrs. Ellerby had spoken the truth on this occasion."

"I cannot understand it at all," replied Emily, uneasily; "but before the day has gone past I shall try to discover what she means. In the meantime it will be as well, perhaps, that I should not be seen speaking to you; therefore I shall retire to the house."

With a silent embrace the girls separated; and Emily hastened to her room, where she remained until she knew that the entire sisterhood were assembled in the chapel, when, hastily putting on her shawl and bonnet, she walked quickly to the lodge. The lay sister who acted as portress was not there, and, seizing the key, Emily opened the gate, and was quickly walking in the direction of the town.

With rapid steps she ascended the stairs leading to the drawing-room, when she reached her father's lodgings; and, opening the door, she found him seated with the priest at a table, on which writing materials were laid. As she came in both sprang to their feet, exclaiming: "How is this? How have you come here?"

"I was uneasy at not hearing from you, father," said Emily; "and I thought I should like to come home and see for myself how you are."

"I am quite well, as you may see, Emily, but very busy, and unable to have you with me at present; therefore I shall have to ask you to remain with Mrs. Ellerby for a few days, until I have made my arrangements complete."

"But, father, there seems to be an impression in

the convent that I am inclined to become a nun," said Emily, gravely; "and I do not desire to countenance it by remaining longer there, if you will allow me to remain at home. I assure you I shall not incommode you, or be in your way in the least," she added earnestly.

"What nonsense are you talking!" began Captain Seward, uneasily; but the priest interrupted him, laughingly, saying,—"My dear sir, have you lived so long in the world without having discovered that what we wish for we sometimes begin to speak of as a certainty. Those young ladies in the convent very naturally desire to have Miss Seward for a companion, and as naturally spoke to her of it as a probability; however, I shall walk back with her while you write that letter, and a few words will put the point out of dispute."

"Do you wish me to go, father?" asked Emily, looking beseechingly at him.

"Certainly, yes," he replied, without looking up from the letter he was in the act of writing, and on which all his thoughts seemed concentrated; "and I am very much obliged to Mr. Devine for so kindly offering to accompany you. Do not be uneasy about me, but content yourself with Mrs. Ellerby until I send for you."

Emily waited a minute after he had ceased speaking, expecting that he would look up, or make some signal of adieu; but, finding that he was quite absorbed in his occupation, she turned away with a sigh and followed the priest down stairs.

The walk to the convent was a very silent one; and, as they entered Mrs. Ellerby's parlour, Emily, although naturally unsuspicious, could not help noticing the look of peculiar intelligence that was interchanged between the priest and the superior. "Ah, truant, welcome back," said the latter with a smile as she pressed Emily's hand. "I have to thank you for bringing her back to me, Mr. Devine."

"Well, now that you have her, keep her safe," replied the priest, laughing; while another significant glance shot from his eyes. "It appears that some of your sisterhood have been calculating on making Miss Seward one of their order; will you set them right on the point. I must hasten away now, as Captain Seward expects me;" and, with a hurried adieu, Mr. Devine was gone.

"Do you dislike us so much as to wish to run away from us, dear girl?" asked Mrs. Ellerby reproachfully; "what have we done to drive you from us?"

"Nothing indeed," replied Emily, half ashamed

of her doubts, and yet not quite easy in her position.

"Then, do not be sorry to spare us a little of your time," said Mrs. Ellerby, tenderly. "Try to make yourself happy while you are with us, and you will make us happy also."

At this moment a lay sister appeared, and informed Mrs. Ellerby that she was wanted for a few minutes in the visitors' room. Dismissing Emily to take off her bonnet, the superior left the room, but Emily remained for a little while absorbed in a kind of reverie, until recollecting that the reverend mother would soon return and expect to see her divested of her walking dress, she left the apartment to remove it; but as she did so the closing of a distant door was heard, and she saw Mr. Devine stealthily cross the lower hall and pass out through a side door.

Swift as a lightning flash she knew who Mrs. Ellerby's visitor had been; and, wondering what could have induced him to remain when he had professed to be in such haste, she hurried to her room, feeling herself involved in some mystery, and yet utterly unable to comprehend to what it tended.

A fortnight passed slowly by; and, with the excep-

tion of a short note received within the first week, to say that he was still busily occupied, Emily had not heard of, or from, her father. One evening, while the nuns were at vespers, she resolved to walk down to the town and beg of her father to allow her to remain with him. The last few days had weighed heavily upon her spirits, and she felt urgently the need of some other influence beside that to be found within the convent walls.

As she drew near the gate the portress came out, hearing her footsteps on the gravel walk; and Emily, bidding her good evening, asked her to open the gate.

"It is after sunset," said the portress, "and I am forbidden to open the gate unless by the reverend mother's directions."

"But," said Emily, "I am a visitor, and I desire to go into town. The convent rules do not apply to me."

"I beg your pardon," replied the lay sister; "but I am under orders, and I cannot disobey them."

"You will allow me then to open the door for myself," said Emily, approaching her hand to the key.

"I cannot do it," replied the woman firmly; "I am ordered not to permit you to leave the convent."

"You are ordered not to let me leave the convent!" echoed Emily; then, I am to consider myself a prisoner?

"You have surprised me into saying more than I intended," answered the confused portress; "you had better see the reverend mother, and she will, I daresay, explain her wishes to you."

"I shall certainly see her without delay, and ascertain the meaning of this conduct," responded Emily as she returned to the house.

The sisters were assembled for supper when the excited girl entered the refectory, and, advancing to Mrs. Ellerby, told her she wished to go into town. Her flushed cheek and walking attire were sufficient to assure the astute superior that some eclaircissement had taken place; and therefore finding that her only plan was to be perfectly open, she drew a letter with a Spanish post-mark from her pocket, and handed it silently to Emily, who, breaking the seal, commenced eagerly reading it on perceiving that the writing was her father's; but, before she had reached the end of the first page, a kind of horror seemed to overwhelm her, and, flinging her arms over her head, with a wild scream she sank upon the floor.

Quietly putting aside Sister Mary Theresa and Sister Mary Agatha, who had sprung forward to raise her, Mrs. Ellerby called Sister Mary Raymond and another elderly nun to her assistance, and the helpless girl was borne to her room and laid upon her bed. Night succeeded evening, and bright sunlight the darkness of night, before Emily was sufficiently roused from the torpor that succeeded her fainting fit to notice surrounding objects; but, when she was able to do so, she found that all her secular garments had been removed, and the robes and veil of a novice lay beside her bed.

CHAPTER VII.

A DIFFERENT ASPECT.

WITH a shudder Emily hid her face in the bed-clothes, and the cruel words of her father's letter rose up in her memory. Hastily springing from the bed, she seized it, and read it with straining eyes, hoping against hope that some sentence, or even word, would contradict the frightful mandate that had overwhelmed her the previous evening; but no, the whole letter bore conviction to her mind that her doom was sealed—that she was consigned to a living tomb without a possibility of escape.

Flinging herself on her knees, the wretched girl poured forth sobs and prayers in wild confusion at the footstool of the Most High, until nature became exhausted, and she sank once more into a prolonged fainting fit.

Mrs. Ellerby must have been on the watch for some such scene, on Emily's awakening from her lethargic slumber; for, she had not lain more than a minute prostrate beside her bed, when the door

opened gently, and the superior and Sister Mary Raymond entered the room.

"It is just as I thought," said the former; "the girl is like a foolish bird beating its wings against the bars of its cage. I begin to wish that Mr. Devine had chosen some other house for her."

"But remember the glory of converting a heretic, reverend mother," said Sister Mary Raymond; while her crafty, cold grey eyes rested unsympathizingly on the poor girl.

"Yes, you are right; I had forgotten that for the moment; but I fear we shall have some trouble in getting her to put on this dress," replied the superior, pointing to it.

"Oh, that is easily managed; and, once she has been seen in it by the sisterhood, she will not have any excuse for refusing to put it on again."

"But that is the very point that I do not know how to manage; I am sure she will not put it on of her own free will, and I do not like as yet to use force."

"No force will be necessary; see, I shall prepare her for it;" and, drawing out a large cutting-out scissors from her pocket, Emily's shining ringlets in another moment were scattered on the floor.

"Now, while she is powerless to prevent it, I shall, if you will assist me a little, put on the dress and veil. You see," she said, after they had rapidly invested the hapless girl in the garments she so much disliked, "it is done; and now we must manage to have her seen by all the sisters."

A quarter of an hour later Emily was roused to consciousness by pungent aromatics; and, on looking round her, found she was the centre of a pitying group as she lay stretched on a sofa in the superior's room, in dress and appearance a nun.

"Daughters," said the superior, as Emily opened her eyes, "you must now leave your new sister to repose; we will hope that our quiet life will very soon assist in removing those fits, to which I believe she has been subject from infancy."

Emily raised her head to deny the assertion, but the rustling veil reminded her how completely she was in the superior's power; and, sinking back, she closed her eyes, while a sickness as of death came over her.

"You see," said the reverend mother, "she is still weak; therefore, daughters, retire, and by evening I hope your Sister Mary Angela will be able to join you at vespers."

The nuns retired, leaving Mrs. Ellerby alone with Emily; and for some minutes an unbroken silence reigned in the room. Emily was too much exhausted for any exertion, and she lay outwardly quiet, but with her thoughts surging like a whirlpool through her brain. At last Mrs. Ellerby addressed her in slow, measured accents.

"Daughter," she said, "your father, who has a right to dispose of you as he will, for you are not of legal age to decide for yourself, has placed you under my care, and informed me exactly what his wishes are concerning you; therefore it is by his authority I act, and I feel that you know your duty to your parent too well to dispute his will. He is your only friend, for you have seen how your other relations have cast you off; therefore you should be the more anxious to please him, and submit cheerfully to the course of life he has marked out for you."

"But, Mrs. Ellerby, I am a Protestant; I do not share your religious feelings or opinions, and I cannot believe your doctrines; how then can I act a lie, and profess to hold a faith that I think a false one?" cried the agitated girl.

"Your father also was a Protestant, and I believe

you will not dispute the fact that his powers of mind are of a higher order than yours; yet he has seen cause to alter his opinions, and is now the zealous monk, Brother Anselmo."

"Oh! it is dreadful—dreadful; it is like some horrid dream. Mother, oh! mother, why did you leave me to this misery?" sobbed Emily.

"If your mother could speak, she would advise you to yield obediently and willingly to your father's commands," said the superior. "You see that your position cannot be altered, you are placed here by your natural guardian; therefore you will find it true wisdom to try to accommodate yourself to it, and the sooner you do so the more quickly will your usual tranquillity return. I shall now leave you to consider until vespers, when I hope to see you in the chapel; meanwhile I shall send you some refreshment, of which I hope you will partake;" and, pressing a kiss on her forehead, the superior left the room.

In a few minutes a lay sister appeared with a tray containing some light, but nourishing food; and, feeling in need of it, Emily took it thankfully.

During the time that intervened before vespers, she thought over her position long and anxiously,

and at length decided on conforming herself outwardly to the rules of the house; while she would be on the watch for an opportunity to escape from her thraldom. In accordance with this resolution, she joined the sisters when the vesper bell rang; and although the superior gave her a gratified look, in token of approval of her conduct, she was inwardly surprised beyond expression at the change a few hours had wrought in Emily, and puzzled herself with efforts to discover its cause.

The next day, during recreation, Emily (now Sister Mary Angela), sought out her only friend in the convent, Sister Mary Theresa; and, as they walked together, she told her the dreadful position in which she was placed.

"I was unutterably astonished," said the nun, after she had expressed her sympathy, "to see you yesterday in the dress of a novice, after your assurance that you had not any intention of embracing a religious life. I could not account for it."

"Nor can I," replied Emily; "I do not recollect anything after reading my father's letter again, until I found myself dressed and downstairs in Mrs. Ellerby's room amongst you all."

"It is certainly very strange," said Sister Mary

Theresa, musingly. Then, a sudden thought striking her, she exclaimed, "I think I understand it now. I was one of the first to enter the room when the alarm was given that you had been seized with another fit, and the reverend mother and Sister Mary Raymond were bending over you; it must be that they went into your cell, and finding you insensible, dressed you and carried you downstairs. Yes, I am sure that is how it was."

"It must have been so," said Emily, after a pause; and her heart sank within her as she thought how unscrupulous were the people in whose power she found herself so completely placed.

"Have you any objection to show me Captain Seward's letter?" asked Sister Mary Theresa.

"Certainly not; you shall read it now," said Emily, handing it to her.

The nun opened it with some curiosity, and read thus:—

"DAUGHTER,—On my arrival in England I found you a bigoted Protestant, and about to wed one as bigoted as yourself; and, having seen reason to join the only true church, I could not leave my child to perish in a false one, therefore I brought you to

T——, and have placed you in a position to learn to believe in a faith that will save your soul. You will see by the address that I write from a monastery in Spain. I am now dead to the world; and, having provided you with a place of safety for soul and body, I desire to forget all earthly ties and be nothing but the monk, Brother Anselmo.

"Your father,

"H. SEWARD.

"P.S.—Mrs. Ellerby will take my place in authority over you, and I strictly enjoin you to receive her commands as mine.—H. S."

Such was the letter; and, with a shudder of disgust, Sister Mary Theresa handed it back to Emily.

"Cruel religion, false faith, that can thus tear asunder all natural ties," cried Emily, in a burst of indignation. The religion of the Bible is love, but this is a denial of God's chief attribute.

"The Bible!" said Sister Mary Theresa, with interest. "I have often wished to read it, but my confessor would not give me permission; he said it was a very dangerous book."

"It is the guide to all truth," cried Emily, with

enthusiasm. "Oh, if you would only read it, you would know what peace and comfort it contains."

"But I *dare* not. I should have to confess it, and then you do not know how severe my penance would be."

"Penance for reading God's holy word," echoed Emily. "What a dreadful idea; surely, you only confess your sins?"

"True; but it *is* a sin to read the Bible when I have been forbidden to do so by my confessor," replied the nun.

"Oh! if you would only read it, you would see how different are its teachings," said Emily, warmly.

"But if I were even inclined to run the risk, where could I get one? There is not one in the convent; and I am sure the reverend mother would not be inclined to procure one for me," replied the nun, smiling.

"There *is* one in the convent; I have my little pocket Bible with me," said Emily. "Fortunately it was in a pocket in my under-clothing, and so it escaped the notice of those who removed my clothes."

"Do not tell me where you keep it; I might be

asked, and should have to tell if I knew," said Sister Mary Theresa, hastily.

"But you will let me read a little for you, sometimes, will you not?" asked Emily.

"I shall think of it; I dare not promise. But there is the bell, let us hurry in;" and, separating, they reached the door by different walks.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JESUIT IN DISGUISE.

One day, while the sisters were in the chapel, an arrival took place at the convent; and, on going into the garden for recreation, they were rather surprised to see a foreign-looking girl in deep mourning, walking with the superior. Coming forward, she introduced her as Mademoiselle Deschappelles, and said they were to have the pleasure of her company for a month before she returned to Paris.

There are times when, without any apparent cause, we feel an instinctive shrinking from an individual we have never seen before; and such was the feeling experienced by Emily, when her eyes encountered the stealthy side glance of the new comer. Involuntarily she turned away, and in doing so met a meaning look from Sister Mary Theresa, a look that expressed plainly an unfavourable opinion of Mademoiselle Deschappelles.

As soon as Emily and Sister Mary Theresa could steal away from the group, they turned into a

shaded walk, and the nun said, "I wonder what brings that girl here openly now? For the last three years I have seen her come here at intervals, but always in a mysterious manner by the side door at the back entrance; and she must have had a latch key, for she never either knocked or rang. During the first years she came alone, but for the two last she has generally been accompanied by two girls of about sixteen and eighteen years of age, with whom she attended mass in the chapel; and then they remained for some time with the superior and the priest before they went away. We have never heard her name until to-day, nor have her visits been alluded to by the reverend mother; so, of course, we did not attempt to make any enquiries. I am glad she is not coming to stay here altogether, for I confess I do not like her."

"Although I have not any reason for it, I am ashamed to say that I share your feeling," said Emily. "There is something so treacherous in the expression of her eyes, that I shrank from her at the first look."

"That is precisely my impression," replied her friend. "However, I do not see that she can interfere with us in any way, so we must try to be at

least polite to her while she stays; and, as she is evidently a favourite of the superior's, perhaps we had better join her party and pay her some attention, lest our absence should be remarked."

"You are right," said Emily; "it would be very unwise not to try to please Mrs. Ellerby, in every way in which conscience is not concerned. Therefore let us do as you say."

The two girls joined the group of nuns round Mademoiselle Deschappelles, who was talking as they came up. "Yes," she said, evidently in reply to a question; "I was their governess, they live just outside the town; but they will not be there long," she added with a sneering laugh, "for their wise parents are taking them over to England, to try to undo the *mischief* I have done them."

A loud laugh from the nuns hailed this speech, and then one of them asked, "But how did you get introduced there?"

"Oh, that was the curious part of the business," replied Mademoiselle Deschappelles. "Mrs. Hilton wrote to a friend in Paris, to get her a *Protestant* finishing governess for her two daughters; and this lady applied to a friend of hers, who is one of our society (but that, of course, is not known generally),

my hand, 'we are grieved to hear, and indeed to perceive ourselves, that you are unhappy. Pray open your mind to us, and, if in our power, the cause of our sorrow shall be removed.'

"At this speech I pretended to weep, and buried my face in my pocket handkerchief to conceal my smiles! 'Oh, Madame,' I said, 'how can I thank you for all your kindness! but alas, my grief arises from a cause that you cannot remove.'

"'Only tell us what it is, and perhaps we may see some way to help you,' they both exclaimed together.

"Thus urged, though with much apparent reluctance, I said, in a voice full of emotion, 'It is caused by my separation from my dear mother; we have never been parted before, and I cannot endure the separation.'

"Without a word Mr. and Mrs. Hilton retired into the next room; and I sat anxiously waiting for their return, feeling sure they were consulting how to get my mother near me. I need not tell you that I had often enough been separated from her before; but saying that I had not roused their pity doubly, and the proof of it was that they returned in a few minutes, and Mrs. Hilton said, 'Mr. Hilton and I

have been speaking about you, dear mademoiselle, and your affection for your mother raises you, if possible, still higher in our estimation; therefore we feel sincerely happy that we have it in our power to remove the cause of your unhappiness. Write at once, and ask your mother to come over and remain with you while you continue with our daughters, which we hope will be until their education is completely finished.'

"This was just what I had expected from what I had seen of them; but, pretending to be amazed and overcome by such generosity, I cried out, 'Oh, no! I could not, my more than kind friends, trespass on your overflowing goodness of heart; it would be shameful to take advantage of such a generous offer.'

"'But, indeed, mademoiselle, you will oblige us by doing so,' said Mrs. Hilton. 'It will be a real pleasure to us to see you and your mother happy together. We can imagine what she must also feel at being separated from you. We know what we should feel ourselves if our children were absent from us in a strange country; so pray do as we request, and write at once to invite your mother to come over.'

"Feigning the greatest reluctance I at last consented, entreating them, however, to reduce my salary one-half (I had a hundred a-year), as my mother would have received that amount from me had she remained in France. As I anticipated, they would not hear of such a thing, desiring me lay it by if I did not require it; and, with a profusion of thanks, I retired from the interview to write for my mother, my heart swelling with triumph at having managed so well to gain my object."

"Well it might," said Sister Mary Raymond, surveying her with admiration, while her sour visage relaxed into a smile; "but how did you manage afterwards?"

"Oh, my mother came, of course; and, as she was a great invalid, she remained almost entirely in her room. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Hilton spoke a word of French, so our conversations, even when she was down stairs, were a sealed book to them; and between us we managed, before the end of the year, to bring over the two girls entirely to the Catholic faith. Every day made them more devout in our religion, more especially after I began to bring them here to mass and to confession; and we had them bound down so to secrecy that they dared

not reveal a word to their parents. At first the mystery and the novelty charmed them, and now they are as firmly devoted to the church as I am myself. It was a great achievement, I assure you, to bring them over to our faith in the midst of their family, and attending their own church."

"Your reward will be great in proportion, sister," observed one of the nuns.

"My reward consists in having done my duty to our order," replied the Frenchwoman.

"But how was the discovery made?" asked one of the sisters.

"Ah, that is the unhappy part of the story," replied Mademoiselle Deschappelles, her pale cheek growing a shade paler. "My poor mother became dangerously ill; and, when she found she was dying, she insisted on seeing the priest. There was no time to send for orders, for her seizure was very sudden, so I had to run the risk, as I dared not let her die without confession; so Mr. Devine was sent for, and, although I got him secretly into the house, Mr. Hilton met him coming down the stairs, and he had to tell that he was visiting my mother. Of course this led to a discovery, and you may imagine the rage and indignation of the Hiltons

when their daughters boldly announced their change of religion. 'Serpent,' 'viper,' and 'temptress,' were a few of the epithets bestowed upon me, until they recollected my mother's state, and then they softened down, and sent me word to do everything I could for her comfort that their house afforded. She died in a few days after the *eclaircissement*, and I remained in my own apartments undisturbed until to-day, when all my arrangements were completed, and I came here."

"You have done good work for the church," said the superior, who had stood near us unobserved; "Sister Mary Raymond also could tell an episode in her experience that is very interesting, if she would."

All eyes were now turned on the stern old nun, who, smiling complacently, said, "If the reverend mother wills it I shall relate the story at evening recreation; the bell is just going to ring for school now."

"I shall be glad if you will give the sisterhood the benefit of your experience," replied the superior, as she turned and led the way to the house, from which the bell at that moment sounded.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONVENT HOSPITAL.

EMILY and Sister Mary Theresa met as they were going into the garden in the evening; and Emily said, "Oh, what a frightful system was revealed to-day by that cruel Frenchwoman. How horrible to steal into a family and blast its happiness as she has done, so remorselessly. It is evident that all the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton failed to touch her heart."

"Heart! I thought you knew that a Jesuit is bound not to possess human feeling," cried the nun. "It is one of their most binding rules that all love and humanity are to be trampled upon when they threaten to interfere in any way with the duties imposed by the order. That woman is a frightful example of what their system can produce; she is as hard as a rock against all that could soften her feelings, in fact I think she has lost all capacity for

feeling; but hush!—here we are close to them, and Sister Mary Raymond is going to tell her story."

Drawing silently near the circle round the old nun, the girls sat rather in the background, and listened to her narrative of the past.

"Before I came to the convent of St. Mary," said Sister Mary Raymond, "I was in a convent in a large city, and we had quite a different life to the life we lead here; for there was an hospital in connection with it, and the nuns took care of the sick. One day I was sent for to the parlour by the superior, and found her with a young woman who had evidently been crying. 'Sit down, daughter,' said the reverend mother, 'and listen to the account this girl gives of her brother.' I sat down and the girl began her story.

"'My little brother Tom and I were left with mother when my father died, and as mother was very poor she took in washing; but very often she had to pawn the clothes instead of washing them, or we might have starved. Although we lived in a lane, there was a grand street in front of us; and one night that my mother was at the mangle-woman's a servant out of the street came in, and asked her if she knew of a boy that could come in

and clean the knives and forks, and boots; and while the woman was thinking, my mother said, 'My Tom could do it.'

"'Well, if he can, I wish you would send him in the morning at seven o'clock,' said the servant; 'for we have got new lodgers and they want a good deal of attendance, so don't forget. Your boy will get two shillings a week.'

"'Never fear,' said my mother, 'he shall be with you in time.' Well, the next morning Tom went, and the people of the house were well satisfied with him. The lodgers had a little baby a few months old, and a little boy five years old, with them; and the reason they came there was that their little daughter was in scarlet fever and they had to remove their two other children out of the house; but all day long the papa and mamma were away with the sick child, and the nurse used to keep Tom to help her to amuse the children. And one day when Mrs. Taylor—the mamma—came in, and found him in the nursery on his knees beside the cradle, whistling to please the baby, she gave him a shilling, and told the nurse to give him his dinner every day. Before very long the little girl got well, and the family went a few miles out of

town for the summer; but Tom was so fond of them that he used to walk out to see them very often, and at last they sent for his mother and offered to keep him altogether, and make a servant of him. And she was so glad that she cried for joy, for often we had nothing to eat we were so poor. Well, Tom was very fond of mother, and often he took things to give her; but he did not think they'd be missed.'

"'What did he take?' asked the superior.

"'Oh, sometimes money, ma'am, and sometimes meat and bread, and such like; but he was found out, and the mistress took him into the library and spoke a great deal to him and warned him how bad it was to steal, and told him that God would be angry with him, and read it to him out of the Bible until she frightened Tom awful, and he never would steal for mother again. But often the lady gave him things for her, and always gave him money to bring her when he was coming to see her. Well, poor Tom got very fond of the mistress, and he thought there was no one like her; but one day the coachman came in when they were out in the country for the summer, and told him suddenly that my mother was dead. Poor Tom fell down in the

stable, and the coachman ran in for the cook to tell her how bad he was, and she told the mistress. Well, Mrs. Taylor was very vexed with the coachman for telling Tom so suddenly, for he was only a little chap of thirteen then, and she sent for him into the library and put her arms round him and comforted him, till he stopped crying; and then she told him she would be a mother to him and take care of him as long as he was a good boy. From that out Tom would die for her. And she kept her word; for she taught him to read and write, and treated him so kindly that he was like one of the family. But one day she gave him a Bible for his own, and Tom used to read it when he had spare time; and when she was paying visits, or shopping, she took him out with the coachman. And she always had tracts and such like in the carriage, and while she was in visiting or buying Tom would be reading, and at last he got such notions that he wouldn't go to confession, and all we could say was no use; and now he's a grown young man and he's taken sick, and we don't know what to do about him.' Here the girl stopped, sobbing bitterly.

"'Where is your brother now?' inquired the reverend mother.

"'He's with my eldest sister, ma'am; she's married to a tradesman, and he came on a visit to them for change of air.'

"'Has he left his situation?' asked the superior.

"'Oh, no, ma'am, the family would never part with him; but when he wished to go for a few days for a change to my sister they let him go, hoping it would do him good.'

"'What do you want us to do?' again asked the reverend mother.

"'Oh, ma'am, sure we only asked him away to bring him here,' replied the girl; 'for I don't know if he'll ever recover he looks so bad, and if he could only be got to confess, and receive the rites of the church, we'd be easy about him.'

"'Well,' said the superior, after a pause, 'you had better bring him as soon as you can, and we shall see what can be done; at all events we'll save him from dying a heretic. You can take charge of him, Sister Mary Raymond,' she said, turning to me; 'and you will do your duty by him I have no doubt." You may be sure that I answered in the affirmative, and the next day the young man was brought in. He did not look very badly; but he complained of a great pain in his side and chest, and tightness of breath-

ing, and sometimes his cheeks were like death, and at others scarlet. As soon as Mrs. Taylor heard he was in the hospital she came to see him, but of course we did not let her; the superior saw her in the parlour, and told her the young man was getting rapidly better and would be home in a week at the farthest. She was highly delighted with the news, and came every day to see him, tormenting the reverend mother with questions, and asking if there was anything he wanted that she could bring. Although she was so anxious to see him, the superior always put her off with excuses, telling her either that he was asleep, or that the people in the ward were so ill they could not be disturbed by a visitor going in, or some other plausible story that completely deceived her; but in the meantime I had a hard task with the young man, who was sometimes well enough to walk about the ward, and as soon as ever he got up he went to the window looking into the street, and sat there watching for Mrs. Taylor's carriage, and the moment he saw it he began imploring to be let see her, even for a minute. At first I said he was too ill to be allowed to see any one; but, when he declared it was making him worse not to be permitted to see her, we told him she did

May God grant that you died believing in what you learned in its blessed pages.'

"'Madam,' said I, coming forward, evidently to her surprise—for she had not noticed me—'the young man died a good Catholic. He confessed to the priest, and received absolution and extreme unction in his last moments.'

"'Did he not wish to see me?' she inquired, gazing sorrowfully on the dead man.

"'No,' I replied; 'he did not wish to see any one but the priest, and the nuns who attended him. He did not wish to disturb his mind with visitors.'

"'Oh! Tom, Tom,' she said, again turning to him with tears; 'I thought you would have wished to see me. How could you forget both me and your Bible so soon?' But the dead tell no tales, so she went away nearly heart-broken about him; while I rejoiced that I had triumphed over both him and her, and that, in spite of himself, he had died with the mark of the cross upon him, and the voice of the priest ringing in his ears."

"It was a good deed, and will meet its reward," said the superior, solemnly; while Emily and Sister Mary Theresa withdrew as silently as they had

come, a horror of such cruelty and treachery filling the mind of Emily; while her friend, although accustomed to hear the doctrine taught, that "the end sanctifies the means," shrank from such double dealing, and began to ask herself the question, "Could it be acceptable in the sight of God?"

CHAPTER X.

A PROFESSION AND A MIRACLE.

About this time the profession of Sister Mary Agatha was to take place, and some young ladies from the town called one day to enquire about it, as they had been invited to be present. It was the hour for recreation; but a sudden shower coming on, the nuns hurried in with their visitors to their own sitting room, where the superior joined them, and gave some details of the expected ceremony to her young friends. One of them was a lively little girl of about twelve or thirteen years of age, and she listened attentively to what the reverend mother said until the description was ended; then, turning to Sister Mary Agatha, she exclaimed, "Well, if I were you, I would not take such vows, and bind myself to stay here for life. You know that once you take the black veil, you never can go away again, or be married; and, my mamma says all girls should be married. So take my advice, go out into the world and get married; and if you don't like

a married life, you can easily come back and be a nun. But, whether you like a nun's life or not, once you take the vows, here you must stay; so think before you do it."

The effect of this speech on the sisterhood may be imagined; some laughed, while others looked more nearly weeping, and some looked angry. The reverend mother forced a simpering laugh, however as she said, drawing the little girl near her, "You funny child, what can have put such ideas into your tiny little head. I shall have you here some day wanting to take the vows that you have been speaking against."

"I shall be married first, you may be sure, reverend mother;" said the saucy girl, shaking back her curls and laughing merrily.

"You should be well whipped, if I had any authority over you," muttered Sister Mary Raymond, as the little girl took her leave and went away with her companions.

In a few days after this conversation, the bishop with some priests arrived in the town to celebrate the profession, and also, as Emily heard to her surprise, to perform a miracle on a poor nun, who had been suffering for some time from a species of

paralysis. Great preparations had been made for the double event; and, on the morning of the important day, the chapel of the convent was decorated with a profusion of flowers, the image of the Virgin was newly clothed in white satin and robes of flowing lace, a veil hung from her head, and a jewelled crown ornamented her brow.

Sister Mary Agatha looked lovely in her bridal dress of white, her long curls floating under a transparent veil, while a wreath of pure white flowers was placed above it. Blushing and trembling, as she felt herself the "observed of all observers," she walked in the procession with downcast eyes, until, apparently forgetting herself as the ceremony proceeded, she became absorbed in the solemn scene in which she was the principal actor. Tremulously, but distinctly, she pronounced the vows that bound her to a life of retirement from the world, and then she was led away by two of the older nuns to be habited in the conventual dress. Her rich robes and jewelled ornaments were quickly laid aside; the long tresses of her shining hair fell severed to the ground; and, in the garments of a nun, with the black veil covering her like a pall, the plain circle of gold on her finger showing forth her

mystical union with Christ, an ever-present reminder of her vows, sister Mary Agatha re-entered the chapel, and joined the sisterhood. Once more the solemn chorus pealed through the chapel, and then, chanting a kind of anthem as they went, the nuns walked from the chapel in a slow procession, and passed out of sight of the visitors. The ceremony was over, and all but the guests invited to the *dejeûne* retired from the chapel, some feeling exalted and delighted by the scene which had appealed so powerfully to their senses; while others, who thought more deeply, felt as if they had been assisting at a funeral, the living tomb to which the beautiful girl they had seen habited as a bride, but a few minutes before, had consigned herself, seeming to them, if possible, more dreadful than the darkness and solitude of the grave.

When the visitors had departed after the *déjeûné*, the bishop and priests walked in the garden for some time with the superior and some of the older nuns, and then prepared for the second ceremony that was to mark the day.

Carrying a kind of shrine containing a small bone of some celebrated saint, the bishop, once more habited in his robes, led the way to the cell of the

sick nun, followed by the priests and nuns in a procession. In a state of intense excitement and expectation, the invalid watched their approach through the open door of her cell, her bed, on which she was laid dressed, commanding a view of the staircase and long gallery through which they approached. Chanting a kind of salutation or benediction, they filed into the little room until it was full, and surrounded the bed, near the head of which the bishop placed himself; while those who could not gain admission to the cell stood in the gallery eagerly looking in through the open door. All the arrangements being complete, the ceremony commenced. The marvellous relic was lifted reverently from its shrine and laid on the limbs and body of the sick nun, while the priests chanted a kind of invocation. As the relic was laid upon her a thrill passed over the invalid, and she became every moment more excited, until at last, rising from her bed, amid cries of "A miracle! a miracle!" she passed from the room and through the wondering nuns down the gallery and staircase and into the chapel, where she prostrated herself before the altar in a state of ecstacy.

Emily, who had been placed in a favourable position to view this scene, was amazed beyond measure

at the bishop and his clergy taking part in a proceeding so contrary to common-sense, not even including religion in the reasons against it. She could easily account for the nervous invalid being affected by it, and restored to the use of her faculties for the time being; but that educated people in possession of health, mental and bodily, should deceive themselves into a belief that a little bone of a dead man could work a miracle, was beyond her comprehension, and, to the great disgust of the sisterhood, she confessed her disbelief in the powers ascribed to the relics when they went into the garden. After the ceremony was over, the bishop and priests were entertained at a grand dinner by the superior, who however did not make known the fact (which Emily either did not hear for months afterwards), that the momentary excitement of the sick nun, so violent in its nature, had resulted in a much worse attack of her malady, and that, with mind as well as body affected by it, she was now in a condition that rendered her recovery hopeless.

But the pale sufferer, now lying speechless in her distant cell, could not come forth to mar the festivities; and mirth and music finished a day which had in its progress sealed the fate of two human beings.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CORDS ARE TIGHTENED.

Days, weeks, and months went by in the same tiresome round of unprofitable duties, after the scenes we have recorded had taken place; and at the end of a year Emily found herself, as it were, part of the machine, whose regular movements seemed clock-like in their perfectness. During that time, neither sight nor sound from the outward world had reached her; and she had begun almost to despair of ever freeing herself from the bondage in which she was held. Her precious little Bible had as yet escaped detection, and from its divine teaching she had received strength and help in many a time of trial. Various and severe were the penances she had been forced to undergo, for repeated refusals to confess to the priest; after she had withstood all the blandishments used by Mrs. Ellerby to induce her to do so. And now a fresh trial awaited her; for the bishop was expected within the week to invest her with the black veil, and receive her formal vows.

It was in vain for Emily to declare that willingly she never would pronounce them; the preparations for the ceremony were continued, quite regardless of her protestations; and, when the important day arrived, she was summoned to the superior's room, to receive her directions before proceeding to the chapel. Having heard them in silence, Emily once more, in the most solemn manner, assured her that she would not take the vows binding herself to a life-long imprisonment, uncongenial to her mind, and to a religion that she could not profess. As usual the superior heard her calmly to the end, thus gaining full evidence of what was in her mind without betraying by look or manner how it affected her; and, without any comment she walked to a table on which was placed a tray with refreshments, and, pouring out a glass of wine, she handed it to Emily, saying, "Drink that, you will require some support in the scene through which you are about to pass."

Grateful for this show of kindness, and feeling her need of even artificial strength, Emily drank the wine; but in a few moments a dreamy languor came over her, and, when she was summoned to the chapel, she followed the superior mechanically,

apparently without a will or wish of her own, and quite passive in her hands.

The ceremony commenced immediately; and, in the same slow, measured manner, Emily went through it, seemingly utterly unconscious of what was going on, repeating the responses as she was ordered; and to the surprise of every one (except those in the secret), apparently quite without emotion of any kind. After the ceremony, she retired to her cell, and, overcome by irrepressible drowsiness, sank into a profound slumber that lasted until the bell for supper sounded through the house; when rising, confused and giddy, she joined the sisters on their way to the refectory.

"How admirably you performed your part," whispered Sister Mary Theresa, as she walked beside her. "I did not think you could have gone through it so well; and, when you spoke, your voice sounded as quiet and unmoved, as though you felt quite satisfied with what you were doing; but I suppose you comforted yourself with the thought that, as it was compulsory, you were not bound by the vows."

"What vows? I do not understand you," replied Emily, amazed. "I have been asleep all day, and

have no recollection of what occurred since I was called to the superior's room this morning."

"Surely you do not forget the scene in the chapel, when you made your profession, and received the black veil?" cried Sister Mary Theresa. "Look at it, there is the proof;" and she drew forward the veil, to the surprise and consternation of Emily.

"I have no recollection of it whatever. I have had a confused kind of dream of the bishop, and a ceremony; but I do not remember anything distinctly."

"I cannot understand it—it is very strange," said her friend. "Your dream was a reality, for you certainly saw the bishop, and went through the the ceremony; but how you imagined it to be a dream, I cannot think."

"I assure you," replied Emily, earnestly, "that I do not recollect anything since Mrs. Ellerby gave me the glass of wine in her room. I seemed in a dream from that moment."

"Gave you a glass of wine!" said Sister Mary Theresa. "Ah! now I begin to see how it is; have you any suspicion?"

"Suspicion of what?" asked Emily.

"That there was more than wine in the glass? Had it any peculiar taste?"

"I really cannot tell," said Emily, becoming bewildered at the idea presented to her mind; "but it is so long since I have tasted wine, that if it even had I should not be likely to detect it."

"The superior will wonder at your delay," whispered a nun who was passing; and the girls hurried into the refectory without further conversation.

Sister Mary Theresa was right in her conjectures. *The wine had been drugged.* Seeing Emily's determined manner, the superior felt assured she would refuse to take the vows; and, in order to avoid a scene that might create a scandal in her convent, and also determined to bring Emily entirely within the power of the church, she had infused a strong narcotic in the wine, and, under its growing influence, Emily had acted mechanically as she was desired. Unlike the profession of Sister Mary Agatha, no visitors were present, nor was Emily dressed as a bride for the sacrifice; all was done secretly and quietly, the simple process of exchanging her white veil for a black one being all the change that was necessary to complete her transformation; and thus, without the power of protecting herself, she had been led, as it were, blindfolded into the snare.

The strong common-sense of Emily told her that vows so obtained were not binding, and she still kept her firm determination to escape from the convent if she ever could find the opportunity.

One day, about a month after the profession had taken place, Sister Mary Theresa was proceeding to her little garden, when, to her surprise, she saw Emily on her knees, going painfully up and down the walk.

"What is this?" she exclaimed, as she drew near; "what are you doing?"

"Do not notice me; I am under punishment," said Emily, as the large tears coursed down her face.

"Punishment! for what?" asked her friend in an excited manner; "this is cruel and humiliating. What have you done to deserve such treatment?"

"I was discovered reading my Bible, and I refused to give it up; that is the reason," said Emily. "I do not weep for my sufferings, but for fear that they may find where I have hidden my precious little Bible—my mother's gift—while I am forced to remain here."

"Where is it? Tell me quickly; for this once I will set them at defiance, and hazard all for you.

I cannot bear to think that you should lose a relic of your mother.

"Oh, thank you, thank you; but I do not like to implicate you," cried Emily.

"Away with all false delicacy, tell me where it is, that I may secure it; it may be lost while we speak."

Thus conjured, Emily revealed her hiding-place; and her friend sped away to try if possible to preserve for her this book, her only comfort in her place of captivity. To her great joy she found it untouched, and, hiding it in her robe, she hastened from the spot, and, avoiding Emily, joined the party at the swing, with an appearance of gaiety that was assumed for the purpose of misleading any one who might observe her.

As the sisters entered the chapel or vespers, she contrived to pass close to Emily, and slipped the little volume into her hand; Emily as speedily concealing it in her wide sleeve, while she gave her friend a look of unutterable gratitude.

From this time she never ventured to remove it from her person during the day, and at night it lay securely under her head. Many were the persecutions she underwent from the superior and her assistant Sister Mary Raymond, when they discovered

how useless it was to combat her religious belief, or to force upon her the acceptance of their own. The most menial offices in the household, as well as the most laborious, were assigned her; and, although her health and spirits gave way under this cruel tyranny, her courage remained undaunted.

Among other penances, was one that was very distasteful to her. It was this: at certain hours the pupils passed through a long hall on their way to the play-ground, or to dinner or supper; and at those hours she was obliged either to walk on her knees up and down the hall, or to kneel there without support while the girls went by. At other times she was ordered to wash the hall; and Sister Mary Raymond stood over her finding fault, and making her go over parts of her work again, in order to humiliate her before the pupils. Naturally Emily was not very strong; and those repeated shocks to her sensibilities, and trials of her strength, made ravages in her health that sometimes almost induced her to hope that death—the great deliverer—would soon set her free.

One night after the midnight service, Emily remained in the chapel so exhausted as to feel scarcely able to return to bed; and as she sat leaning

against a pillar, thought weighed heavily upon her heart; sigh after sigh broke unconsciously from her as she thought on her dreary present, and compared it with what might have been. Desolate and alone, her courage seemed entirely to have deserted her, and she was sunk in an almost hopeless access of despair, when a soft hand was laid upon her arm, and her head was drawn upon a loving breast.

"Dear Emily, my heart bleeds for you," said her friend as she pressed her lips upon her forehead, "would that I could serve you, or bear part of your burden."

"God forbid that I should sadden you with it," said Emily, as she returned the embrace. "You have your own troubles; truly the 'heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and 'a wounded spirit who can bear.'"

"What is that quotation from?" asked Sister Mary Theresa. "I feel that it applies to me, as well as to you."

"It is from the Bible," said Emily. "There is not any frame of mind in which humanity can indulge that is not described there, and encouragement, reproof, or sympathy, to be found for it."

"If that is so, why do the priests condemn it?" inquired Sister Mary Theresa.

"I fear it is because it would not suit their purpose to permit its being freely read."

"Why?" asked the nun.

"Because their teaching differs widely from the teaching of the Holy Scriptures: there, we are told that 'the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;' but the priests tell you you must do penance during life, and go to purgatory after you are dead, to make you fit to enter the presence of God. The Bible tells us that 'all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;' but the priests say, your own good works are to purchase your salvation. The Bible tells us, speaking of graven images and paintings, in the Commandments,—'Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them;' but the Romish Church makes her followers 'bow down' to crosses, and paintings, and actually worship them; although the Lord says in reference to it in the same commandment,—'I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.'"

"Is that really in the Bible?" asked Sister Mary Theresa, anxiously.

"Yes, it is the real doctrine of the Bible." Oh, how simple is the plan of salvation; and yet how the Romish Church perverts it!"

"What do you mean? What plan of salvation do you speak of?" cried Sister Mary Theresa, greatly interested.

"Christ's plan—that spoken of from the beginning of the world, when the Lord, in expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after their sin, promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. That promise was fulfilled when Christ came into the world, and himself, sinless, died for the sins of the whole world—a perfect sacrifice, fulfilling all the law, and making free of sin all those who believe in him. Oh! sister, when Christ has paid our entire debt for us, why should we foolishly try to pay a small part for ourselves. If all is fully and freely paid, surely we have nothing to do but to accept such great salvation."

"Emily," said her friend, after a pause, "I have often thought over what you have told me about the Bible, and longed to read it for myself; but now, I

have made up my mind that I will read it, and if I find that God authorises it, no man shall prevent me."

"Well determined, if you are permitted to do so, sister," said Sister Mary Raymond, stepping from behind the pillar. "The reverend mother shall know of this. Go to your cells; it is advancing towards morning;" and motioning to the terrified girls to walk before her, the stern old nun marched them to their cells.

CHAPTER XII.

PERSECUTION.

As Emily left her cell the next morning, Sister Mary Raymond presented herself, with compressed lips and frowning brow, and prevented her egress. "Return to your cell, wretched girl," she said, harshly; "the reverend mother will deal with you when the morning duties are over."

With a shudder, Emily re-entered the room, and heard a bolt shot to on the outside of the door before the solemn tread of Sister Mary Raymond's feet moved from it. For fully two hours she sat in waiting for the promised visit from the superior, preparing herself for it by reading some comforting promises in God's holy word. Deeply intent on a particular passage that seemed peculiarly adapted to her present feelings, she was absorbed in its contemplation when the book was snatched from her hand, and the reverend mother stood before her in all the triumph of her victory.

Hastily and contemptuously turning over the leaves, she said sneeringly,—"So this is the wonderful Bible you have kept concealed so long. It is my turn to keep the valuable article now, so look your last upon it." And so saying, she held it for a moment opposite the weeping girl before she consigned it to a pocket concealed in her dress.

"Come," she said, abruptly changing her tone to one of authority; "we have had enough of this play, it is now time to act. You have been discovered corrupting the minds of the community, and you must be separated as a black sheep from the flock: follow me."

Emily rose mechanically, and followed her from the cell, and down a flight of stairs that was hidden from general view by a door. The loss of her Bible had stupified her; and, scarcely noticing where she was going to, she walked after the superior as one in a dream. At length the reverend mother stopped at a low door in the underground part of the house; and, having a kind of idea that it was a coal vault, or some such place, Emily followed her into it. A dim light was burning in the vault; but before Emily had time to distinguish any object, she heard the key turn in the lock, and, rushing to the door, found

it securely fastened on the outside. She was alone and a prisoner.

In her horror at her position, Emily looked wildly round, seeking for some means of escape; but there was neither window nor door, except the one by which she had entered. The dim light now revealed to her a low, vaulted room, entirely built of stone; in one corner was a truckle bedstead, with a mattress, a chair, and table, being the only other furniture in the room. Once more Emily rushed to the door, and, almost phrenzied by terror, beat her hands wildly against it; but the hard iron only bruised and hurt her, without conveying a sound to the outward world. In despair the poor girl sunk on the wretched bed, and a kind of stupor mercifully settled on her powers of thought until the door opened slowly, and Sister Mary Raymond appeared with some food.

Sick and giddy, m'ly rose up to meet her, imploring of her to release her from this dreadful place.

"You have only yourself to blame," said the nun, sternly; "for nearly two years the reverend mother has patiently borne your obstinate determination to resist her authority. You have been

repeatedly warned, and now you must bear your punishment as best you may."

"But I deny her right to punish me. I am not under her authority, and I never shall consent to consider myself bound by her rules," cried Emily, frantic with emotion.

"Whether you consent or not is of very little consequence," said the nun, coldly. "Here you are, and here you must remain during her will and pleasure. It is all for your own good, and you will yet bless her for it, if not in this world you will in the next."

"Truly," said Emily, in the bitterness of her heart, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

"You had better not give your tongue so much license, obstinate sinner that you are," cried Sister Mary Raymond, almost choked with passion; "the reverend mother shall hear how determined you are to continue in your evil course; and only that I am bound to obedience I would not waste her gracious message on so hardened a wretch. She desired me tell you that when you make up your mind to conform fully to the duties of our holy religion you shall be released, but until then you are to remain a prisoner

here;" and, with an envenomed look of hatred and disgust, the nun stalked out of the vault, locking and bolting the door behind her.

Faint for want of food, Emily was glad to take some refreshment; and, although it consisted of nothing more than bread and milk, she felt strengthened, and better able to think, after she had partaken of it. Her precious Bible was, indeed, gone; but from her well-stored memory hosts of consoling promises rose up to comfort her, and with a mind more at ease, and a heart firmly relying on God's gracious Providence, she laid her head on the pillow that night, and slept more calmly than her persecutors.

Unknown to the superior, an undercurrent of rebellion against her authority had been for some time prevailing in the convent; and, as it was countenanced by the confessor, a Mr. Shelden, it had gained strength and form before she was even aware of its existence; and, curious to say, the very effort she made to assert her complete authority over the wills and persons of the sisterhood was the immediate means of determining the more daring spirits engaged in the conspiracy to act for themselves, and openly set her at defiance.

Sister Mary Theresa had been quite unaware of the proposed rebellion until the day on which Emily was consigned to her underground prison—a day on which she also was ordered to remain in meditation on her knees before the altar, until the superior should decide on a fitting punishment for her intended act of disobedience. In answer to her enquiries about Emily, she was told, with an ambiguous smile, that "Sister Mary Angela" was "in retreat," and that it was hoped her private and solitary meditations would have the effect of bringing her to a better state of mind.

Plunged in a state of intense anxiety for the fate of her friend, Sister Mary Theresa knelt before the altar, unconscious of surrounding objects, until a whispered conversation attracted her attention, and, looking cautiously round, she saw Mr. Shelden in earnest consultation with Sister Mary Catherine, an elderly nun, whose round face and merry eyes spoke more for a love of fun and good living than for her enjoyment of conventual discipline. This nun was rather a notability in the convent, as she was possessed of property settled on her in such a manner as that she alone could draw its revenues, which could not be alienated to the convent without her

consent, and in case of her death she could will it to whom she pleased. Her position had been always a very pleasant one, as she had the power of leaving her money outside the convent walls had she chosen; therefore quarter-day was always a gala day with her, and, as she had always been very munificent in her gifts, the superior had no cause of complaint against her, except the secret feeling of envy of her independence, which she could not always repress, and which sometimes exhibited itself in petty annoyances and impositions of penance very galling to such a mind as that of Sister Mary Catherine, who did not at all admire fasting or being deprived of a favourite dish, especially when it was placed temptingly within her reach.

The constant repetition of these irritating penances had roused up all the latent anger that dwelt in the rather foolish but good-natured mind of Sister Mary Catherine; and, in a state of great excitement one day, she opened her heart to the confessor, and told him all her grievances. He at once perceived a way of securing a golden harvest for himself; and, sympathising warmly with her, while at the same time he contrived to pour oil upon the flames, he adroitly stirred up the full storm of

her rage to such a pitch that she became determined to be her own mistress, and refuse to submit any longer to the rule of the reverend mother. For this purpose the confessor had continually instilled ideas of a state of more freedom and enjoyment into the minds of some six or seven of the sisterhood; and the plot, which was to result in giving them a good-natured, good-humoured superior, like Sister Mary Catherine, instead of the more distant and stately reverend mother, found great favour with them, more especially as it would involve change of scene and place, a thing of which they were all desirous. The gentle, kindly manners of Emily had made her a favourite with all the sisters; and the whispered information of her imprisonment, without any reason being given for it, was as a spark to gunpowder; therefore, to Sister Mary Theresa's great surprise, she heard enough to convince her that an escape of some considerable number of the nuns was meditated, and seeing that Sister Mary Catherine was evidently the principal mover in it, she could well understand the confessor's warm participation in the plot.

Rising gently from where she was hidden by a stall, she advanced quickly to the whispering pair,

and to their consternation told them she was aware of their design.

"Oh, do not betray us to the superior," cried Sister Mary Catherine, beseechingly; "this night will be our last within these walls. Only keep the secret until to-morrow, and we shall be safe."

"I will keep the secret on one condition—that you take me with you," said the younger nun, smiling.

"Oh, that is an easy one. You know you were always a favourite of mine, and I do not think you will find my rule a very hard one," said the new superior, patting her on the cheek caressingly. "Well, that is comfortably settled; and now do not forget the plan. After the *officium nocturnum*, stay quietly in your cell until I tap at the door, and then go noiselessly down stairs, and out by the side door. You will find it open. I shall be there waiting for you."

"But how shall we get out of the grounds? The portress keeps the key of the gate until she gives it up at night to the reverend mother, you know; and she will have done so long before that hour."

"We are provided against that difficulty," said Mr. Shelden, drawing a key from his pocket. "See, I have the open sesame at all times."

Still more astonished, Sister Mary Theresa, however, very wisely kept her surprise to herself, too much rejoiced at her prospect of escape to risk losing it by any remarks. After a little more conversation, the confederates separated, Sister Mary Theresa retiring to her place before the altar, while the confessor went to pay the superior a visit, and Sister Mary Catherine walked round the garden enjoying a present of fresh strawberries, the gift of the shrewd Mr. Shelden.

How slowly the hours pass by to those in anxious expectation of any coming event! Many were the glances directed to the clock by the conspirators as the day wore on; but relentless time moved on its even course, regardless of their desire to hurry it. However, the longest day *must* come to a close, and at last the convent was quiet; and the expectant nuns, trembling with excitement, stood each within her door waiting for the summons to descend. How Sister Mary Theresa's heart beat as she listened for the signal, each minute as it passed filling her with fears that she had been forgotten; for, even in her

fear of being left behind, she did not accuse Sister Mary Catherine of willingly deserting her, but she thought that, as she had so lately joined the ranks, it was possible that, in the hurry of escape, she might not be remembered. Thoughts of Emily also flitted across her mind, filling her with sadness. She well knew that some secret place of confinement held her friend, but she had not any idea that it was a vault only fit to store coals or wood in. Her own liberty would, she felt, give her the power of assisting Emily effectually; and for her sake she longed most ardently to be free. In the midst of her meditations a gentle tap on the door caused her heart to give a sudden bound as though it would burst its limits, and gently turning the handle she passed into the gallery, and sped swiftly down the stairs, and through the side door into the garden, where several dark figures were already standing clustered together.

"Are we all here?" asked Sister Mary Catherine, in a whisper.

"Yes, reverend mother," replied a voice, in an equally low tone.

With a gratified thrill, as the title fell on her ears, the new superior turned towards the gate,

where Mr. Shelden stood waiting for them; and in a minute more the entire party were on the road, and free as the air they breathed. Sister Mary Theresa could have screamed with joy, but that a tight grasp seemed laid upon her heart; and tears of delicious feeling streamed from her eyes. The superior was all activity and bustle, and the other nuns were all in a frame of mind half composed of joy, half of fear, at finding themselves in a lonely road in the depth of night, freed from the strict rules that had bound some of them for years, and scarcely daring to use their own new-found liberty. Two carriages were in waiting at a little distance; and putting the nuns into them, the priest mounted the box of the first, and directed the coachman to drive to a house in the town where he had already engaged lodgings for the nuns, and in the drawing-room of which they were soon seated round a table, on which stood a goodly supper ordered by the provident forethought of the superior, who presided in the most hospitable manner.

The blazing fire, brilliant lights, and goodly fare, with the hilarity of the new superior and the attentive care of her satellite the confessor, were all

equally new and bewildering to the released nuns, who could hardly believe their senses at the wonderful transformation; and hours elapsed after they had retired to bed before they could persuade themselves that they were not the victims of some strange freak of their imagination.

CHAPTER XIII.

LENTEN FARE.

The dismay and alarm in the convent when the evasion of the nuns—especially Sister Mary Catherine—was discovered, cannot be described. The bishop was immediately appealed to; but, being convinced by the *weighty* arguments of Sister Mary Catherine, that the sum of £90,000 at her disposal would be lost to the Church for ever, if her arrangements were interfered with, he very wisely left her to her own devices, and admonished the superior to be more careful in future to keep watch and ward over her charge; thus giving her a double wound—in her authority and guardianship.

Emily still continued an inmate of her gloomy prison, night and day alternating without her being aware of their relative times, as her food was brought but once a day; and as to whether that time were morning or evening she had not any means of dis-

covering. In the meantime Lent commenced, and fasting was rigorously observed within the convent walls. Pale nuns became paler still, and thin ones seemed about to become shadows, as the season advanced; for, in her anger at the escape of the few, the superior exhausted her ingenuity in tormenting the many. Emily shared the fate of her companions, if such they could be called; for, although her food could not well be made poorer in *quality*, it was now reduced in *quantity*, and the poor girl suffered not alone the pangs of hunger from insufficient nourishment, but her health became daily worse as the Lent advanced.

In the meantime, the liberated party at T—— contrived to make the time pass very pleasantly. Curiously enough, the priest had selected the house of a Protestant widow in which to locate the nuns; and, much to the astonishment of the worthy woman, their conduct did not much agree with her preconceived ideas of convent discipline. Before Lent commenced the day was one round of enjoyment, which consisted chiefly in ordering and partaking of every good thing that the season afforded, with a little interlude of novel reading, or other amusements, to get over the time. Lent, however,

changed the scene a little, but if for the better, the good woman could not decide.

Since she had taken up her abode at Mrs. Carter's, the new superior had provided herself with a worldly dress, also one that would fit any figure, in which each of the nuns were habited in their turn. Every morning, taking one of the sisters as her companion, the superior set out to market and shop; and the quantity of good things she sent in bewildered the worthy Mrs. Carter, who thought it almost impossible that they could all be used. As Lent commenced of course the order of things was a little changed; but the description of one day will suffice for all. According to convent rule, a slight refreshment in the morning, followed by dinner at noon, and a refection (as it is called) at night, are the full allowance of meals; and, determined to keep to the letter of the rule, the superior contrived to manage very well in her own observance of it. Rising at a very late hour, the "slight refreshment," consisting of tea and toast, was found to be amply sufficient until dinner time at noon, when a long table, extending through the room, one end of which was laid for dinner, while the other had all the appliances for tea, by the simple expedient of remaining at the table

from the time dinner commenced until it was time for tea, the entire performance was made to represent one meal, after which the table was taken away, and fun, frolic, and dancing, in which Mr. Shelden joined, were the order of the night—the "refection" being a nice substitute for supper before the party broke up.

Dismembered chairs and broken footstools bore record to the liveliness of the party, to the great scandal of the sober landlady, who was perfectly horrified at such proceedings, so much opposed to all her preconceived ideas of convent life; but the gay superior and her merry nuns laughed at her scruples, and amused themselves while they could, only too glad to have the opportunity, and determined to avail themselves of it to the fullest extent.

Mr. Shelden was the life and soul of the party, after the superior; and many a game of "blindman's Buff," and "Puss in the Corner" gave evidence of his enjoyment of the fun; his only drawback being an ever-present fear that the bishop might hear that the proceedings of the new sisterhood were not exactly as strict as they might be, and issue some veto accordingly; but Lent drew to a close, and the life and gaiety of the party were un-

disturbed by any interference on the part of his diocesan, and as time passed, the priest became more at ease; and at length the entire party seemed to have formed themselves into a committee of pleasure, not very unlike the Decameronian scenes described by Boccacio, and which at last produced a determined order from Mrs. Carter to quit her house, several milder intimations of her desire for peaceable possession having failed to produce any effect.

Sister Mary Theresa had felt herself in a new and extremely unpleasant element in these scenes; but, without money or clothes, she knew not how to extricate herself from her position. Mrs. Carter had, however, perceived the difference in her demeanour as contrasted with the superior and the other nuns, and was prepared to act kindly by her should the opportunity arise.

She was not, therefore, very much surprised to receive a private visit from the young nun, even before things had arrived at the crisis we have described, or to find that she was anxious to leave her present associates. She was grieved to learn that the poor girl was literally friendless, and also without any means of making out life. Sister Mary Theresa told her that she had written to Emily's

friends, who, she also hoped, would have been her friends (to the extent of trying to find her employment), several times, but without hearing from them in reply; and in addition to her own perplexities, she had now the sorrowful conviction that she could not help that dear friend imprisoned within those walls from which she had so wonderfully made her own escape.

"Do not despair, my dear child," said Mrs. Carter, soothingly, after she had heard her story. "I have a friend here who will help you if he is able; he is the curate of our church. Have you any objection to see him, and consult him about yourself and your friend?"

"I should be only too glad to do so, and most grateful to him for his advice; but do you think he would trouble himself about us?" asked the nun.

"Trouble? He would not think it any trouble. He will look on it as his duty and pleasure to help you," cried Mrs. Carter; "and actually here he is just coming in to answer for himself. Well, this is really providential, for I did not expect him here this week." As she spoke the young clergyman entered the room, and Sister Mary Theresa rose in blushing confusion at being so suddenly confronted

with one who she hoped would befriend her. He evidently was not so much surprised to see a nun in Mrs. Carter's quiet parlour, as he had already heard of the party being domiciled under her roof. Always accustomed to think that "what is to be done may as well be done at once," Mrs. Carter opened the subject, and introduced Sister Mary Theresa to the young clergyman, saying, "Now, Mr. Stanley, I know you will advise her to the best of your ability."

"Surely yes," he replied, smiling kindly, as he seated himself near her; "if you will favour me with your confidence, I shall do my utmost to be of service to you, and my mother and sisters will, I am sure, say the same."

While he spoke, Sister Mary Theresa had changed colour rapidly, and examined him with anxious eyes, trying to appear calm, but evidently almost in vain. Surprised at her demeanour, and wondering that she did not reply, he was about to repeat what he had said, when a violent fit of weeping shook the slight form of the nun; and, although the tears were mingled with smiles, it was evident that she could not for a little time control herself sufficiently to speak.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW LIGHT IS THROWN ON THE SCENE.

After a few minutes, Sister Mary Theresa restrained her feelings, and, addressing the clergyman, said, "Did I not hear Mrs. Carter call you Mr. Stanley?"

"Yes, that is my name," he replied.

"What is your Christian name?" the nun asked almost breathlessly.

"Edward," he answered, in surprise at her questions.

"Did you know Emily Seward?" again asked the nun in great agitation.

"Emily Seward! oh, can you tell me anything of her? where is she, why has she hidden herself from me?" exclaimed Edward, scarcely able to speak from excitement.

"She has not hidden herself from you; she loves you sincerely still; but, when you never answered one of her letters, she thought you had forgotten her."

"Never answered her letters! why, I never received one from her, or heard a word about her since the day she left our house," cried Edward.

"Oh! I thought so, they went cleverly to work," said Sister Mary Theresa.

"But where is she? where can I find her?" asked Edward eagerly.

"She is very near you, in the convent on the hill," replied the nun slowly.

"In a convent? what is she doing there? what can she want in such a place? To think that I have been so near her for more than a year, and still not to know of it. Do explain to me why she went there," cried Edward.

"You shall hear all," replied the nun; and, to the horror and surprize of her hearer, she told him the whole story of Captain Seward's change of faith, and of his conduct to his child. Amazement, sorrow, and indignation were painted by turns in Edward's face as he heard the cruel account; but, as it was concluded, he sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "I shall go this moment and liberate her; my poor Emily! what she has been suffering; oh, cruel religion, false faith, that leads to such awful practices, such tearing asunder of all natural ties,

such deceit, and hypocrisy, and tyranny. Good-bye for the present, my dear young lady; I never can thank you enough for your kindness to my Emily, and for being the means of making known her position to me. Oh!" he added with a shudder, "to think that but for you she might have been a prisoner for life in that dreadful place;" and, seizing his hat, Edward hurried from the room.

"How did you know that Mr. Stanley was the promised husband of your friend?" asked Mrs. Carter.

"The moment he entered the room I thought I I had seen him somewhere before, his features were so familiar to me; but, when you mentioned his name, I at once remembered that Emily had drawn his likeness with a pencil for me, and I knew then why I recognized his face."

"It is very wonderful," said Mrs. Carter, musingly. "Well, I am sure he will act with energy and promptitude; and I am rejoiced at the turn things have taken, for your sake, as well as for that of your friend. Do not, I advise you, say anything on the subject to your superior; for, although she is very good-natured, she may resent your wish to leave her, and might take measures to prevent your obtaining your full liberty."

"You are very kind to warn me," said Sister Mary Theresa gratefully; "I have to thank you altogether for this happy change in my prospects, and those of my friend; if you had not thought of speaking to Mr. Stanley, I should never have discovered that he was Emily's friend."

"My dear young lady, our ways are in the hands of a higher power than ours; but I am deeply thankful that I have been made the means of this discovery. I wonder what steps Mr. Stanley will take to liberate his cousin. I am sure you must be very anxious until you hear further."

"Yes, I certainly shall; but I am so rejoiced to think that he is aware of poor Emily's position, and doing his utmost to set her free, that I can now await the result with patience."

"You may be sure he will not rest until she is at liberty," replied Mrs. Carter warmly; "Mr. Stanley is not a man to do things by halves. Your friend will be as free as you are before night, or I am greatly mistaken."

"Oh, do not raise my hopes too highly," said the nun; "you do not know how difficult he will find it to deal with such at a woman as Mrs. Ellerby. She is so fair in seeming, and yet so deceitful and

treacherous, she may persuade him that Emily is not there; or perhaps, she may boldly declare that she will not give her up."

"Do not alarm yourself," said Mrs. Carter, soothingly, "Mr. Stanley is well prepared for all her artifices; and, if she refuses to liberate her victim, the arm of the law is strong enough to compel her to do so; so, have no fears.

The day wore on, and at intervals Sister Mary Theresa stole down to Mrs. Carter's little parlour, to ask if she had learnt any news; but nothing had been heard of the friend about whom she was so anxious. The shadows of evening fell at last; and, just as the poor girl was beginning to feel feverishly nervous and anxious, a carriage drove up to the door, and Mr. Stanley rushed in. "Come my dear young lady," he said, taking her hand, "we wait for you, all is right;" and, waving his hand to Mrs. Carter, he supported the trembling girl on his arm, and, placing her in the carriage, took his seat beside her and told the coachman to drive on.

There was a hurried rush upstairs, an opening and shutting of doors, and various exclamations of surprise and alarm. Some of the nuns had seen Sister Mary Theresa enter the carriage with a

gentleman, and as it was driven from the door they hastened to tell the news to the superior, who was enjoying a little repose in her own room, and who at first could scarcely believe it possible that one of her pets could break away from her good-natured rule; but, comforting herself with the reflection that, if the runaway was not content, it was much better to let her please herself, she settled herself more comfortably in her easy chair, and was soon enjoying again the quiet repose that had been interrupted by such strange news.

CHAPTER XV.

LIBERTY AND ITS OPPOSITE.

When Edward Stanley left Mrs. Carter's in the morning, he had hurried directly to the house of the nearest magistrate; and, having explained the case to him, and secured his co-operation, he hastened to tell his mother the wonderful news of his discovery of the long-missing one, and to take her with him to the convent. Mrs. Stanley was mute from surprise and joy when she heard in a few hasty words that Emily was so near them; and, hurrying away for her walking dress, she was quite ready for her visit to the convent when Mr. Delmore, the magistrate, drove up to the door in a close carriage.

A very short time brought the party to the convent, where, having asked to see Mrs. Ellerby, they were received by that lady with much courtesy, no suspicion of the cause of their visit having entered her mind. As soon as they were seated, Mrs.

Stanley said, with as much ease of manner as her agitation would permit, "We have come to see Miss Seward, who has been for some time your visitor; will you be kind enough to have her told that her aunt is here?

Had a shell exploded beside her, the blank consternation of the superior could not have been greater; for a moment she sat with distended eyes and colourless face, staring vacantly before her; then, making a violent effort to rally her faculties, she said, confusedly, "You are mistaken, my dear lady; Miss Seward indeed was here for a little time, but she is here no longer."

"Where is she, then?" cried Edward, "where have you taken her to? I must know; I shall never give up the search until I find her."

Mrs. Ellerby could not meet his inquiring gaze; and, still more confused, she tried to make some explanation that at once convinced them all she was only trying to deceive them by her statement that Emily was not in the convent. Perceiving that conciliatory measures would be fruitless, Mr. Delmore said, "Madam, I must inform you that you have placed yourself in the power of the law, by detaining Miss Seward here contrary to her will;

I am a magistrate, and I have provided Mr. Stanley with a search warrant, therefore I must insist that you at once lead us to Miss Seward's room, otherwise I shall proceed immediately to search the house for her. You have now your choice; and I warn you, for your own sake, not to give us any further trouble, or to try to resist my authority."

"*Miss Seward* is not here, as I told you," said Mrs. Ellerby, craftily sheltering her falsehood under a subterfuge; "she who was Miss Seward in the world, is now Sister Mary Angela in religion; and your authority does not extend to a professed nun, who has taken the vows." "You are mistaken, madam," said the magistrate, coolly; "my authority enables me to liberate every nun in your convent, if they are disposed to leave it, even though their vows were voluntary; but," he added significantly, "we are well aware of the mode by which you secured Miss Seward's apparent acquiescence in the pretended profession you compelled her to make. Do not let us waste any more time; I assure you it is unavailing; and the sooner you put an end to this unpleasant business, the better."

"If you compel me, I suppose I must obey,"

said the superior rising; "I shall, therefore, bring Sister Mary Angela to you, if she is willing to see you."

"Excuse me, madam, we shall accompany you, if you please," said Mr. Delmore with decision, as he observed the latter part of Mrs. Ellerby's forced speech of consent.

Biting her lips with baffled rage, the superior turned to the door and left the room, followed closely by the magistrate, Mrs. Stanley and Edward. Turning quickly into a side passage, she hastened down the stairs leading to the lower part of the house, and, taking a key from her pocket, she hissed from between her teeth, "Take her if you like, but you will not have her very long;" and, flinging open the door of the vault, she turned from them and walked rapidly away.

For a moment the dim light prevented their distinguishing any object in the vault; but, as their eyes became more accustomed to it, they saw the miserable bed, and on it the attenuated figure of Emily in her nun's garb. With dilated eyes the poor girl stared at them for a moment in unutterable surprise; then, with a cry of joy that pierced their hearts, as she recognised them, she tried to

fling herself into the extended arms of Edward and her aunt; but nature could not endure the sudden change from misery to bliss, and she sank back in a state of helpless weakness, the loving light of her eyes alone showing that she lived. Raising her gently in his arms, Edward bore her into the passage, where the fresh air revived her a little; and then, with the assistance of Mr. Delmore, she was conveyed to the carriage, and soon on her way to her aunt's house, her head pillowed on the heart that beat so truly for her.

Mr. Delmore, who had heard all the particulars of Emily's imprisonment from Edward, remained after them at the convent, and demanded to see Mrs. Ellerby, who descended to meet him with a sullen brow and fiery eyes.

"I am at a loss to know, sir," she commenced, "for what purpose you desire to see me again. You have accomplished your purpose in removing a professed nun from under my authority—placed so by her father—to whom you must answer for it; what more do you require?"

"I require you, madam, to deliver up to me the Bible you forcibly took from Miss Seward. Are you aware that you are dealt with very leniently in not

being prosecuted for theft, or rather, open, violent robbery," said the magistrate, severely.

Almost suffocated with suppressed fury, the superior turned to her desk, and, taking out the little Bible, threw it contemptuously on the table, exclaiming, "There, sir, take your wonderful prize, and now rid me of your presence."

"Be assured that I do so with the greatest pleasure," replied Mr. Delmore, as he placed the book in his pocket. "I never thought it would be my misfortune to come in contact with a woman like you, deprived of all the attributes that make her lovely and attractive, a moral deformity far beyond any physical defects; but, take one warning, that if your wickedness should prove to have any lasting effect on Miss Seward, you shall not escape unpunished. I shall make it my own business to see justice done upon you;" and, so saying, the magistrate left the house, without another glance at the wicked woman, who, terrified at last, lest she really might be made amenable to the laws she had violated, sat down immediately and wrote to the bishop to try to negociate for her removal to another convent.

Emily had been taken directly from the carriage to a comfortable bed, where, watched by the loving

eyes of her aunt and cousins, she rested in thankful security, while Edward went to Mrs. Carter's for Sister Mary Theresa, who was soon one of the happy group beside her friend.

In the course of the evening, Mr. Delmore came to enquire for Emily, and to restore her precious little Bible; and, from the companion of her captivity, he learned all the particulars that were necessary to convict Mrs. Ellerby of legal offences if it should arise that any proceedings should be taken against her.

While Emily was slowly progressing towards health, great changes were taking place at the convent. Mrs. Ellerby was removed to a distant part of the country, and the new superior of the runaway nuns was duly installed in her place, having previously endowed the convent with her large fortune. Her return with her small company was hailed with joy by the sisterhood, who looked forward to a new state of things under her light, easy rule; but when did the Church of Rome keep faith when it was politic to do otherwise? Having secured her person and her fortune, it had no further need of Sister Mary Catherine; and, to her horror and amazement, as well as to the grief of

the sisterhood, the poor lady was ordered to return to her former position in the convent, with a warning to conduct herself well, or her irregularities, while absent in the town, would be severely inquired into and punished.

A French superior, from a very strict convent, was placed over the sisterhood; and fasting and penance once more mortified the community of St. Mary.

For some time Emily's health was very precarious; but, by the doctor's advice, Edward, who was deeply anxious about her, resolved to take her to a mild climate for a year. A quiet wedding, at which no persons were present, except Mr. Delmore and Mrs. Carter, gave him the right to guard her as his own; and, at the end of the year, he brought her home in the full bloom of health, and happier than she had ever been in her life. Nothing had been heard from her father since he replied in a few short lines to Mrs. Stanley's letter, informing him of his daughter's marriage with her son. In them he had formally renounced her as his child, and stated that he belonged only to the Order of St. Joseph, and was not to be troubled any more with secular affairs in which he did not take any interest. This

letter set at rest all doubts as to his complete carelessness about his child; and Emily shuddered at the thought of the life to which he had so remorselessly consigned her, and from which she had so miraculously escaped.

The careful reading of Emily's little Bible, while she was absent on the continent, had opened Sister Mary Theresa's mind to a knowledge of divine truth, and she only awaited the return of her beloved friend and her husband to renounce openly the errors of the Church of Rome.

A friendship, succeeded by sincere affection, had grown into a lasting attachment between her and Mr. Delmore; and Edward had the happiness of uniting those who had been instrumental in securing his own domestic happiness. Thus "out of evil came good;" and, in after years, at many a Christmas gathering, the friends recounted scenes from their past experience to illustrate the evils of convent life.

THE END.

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